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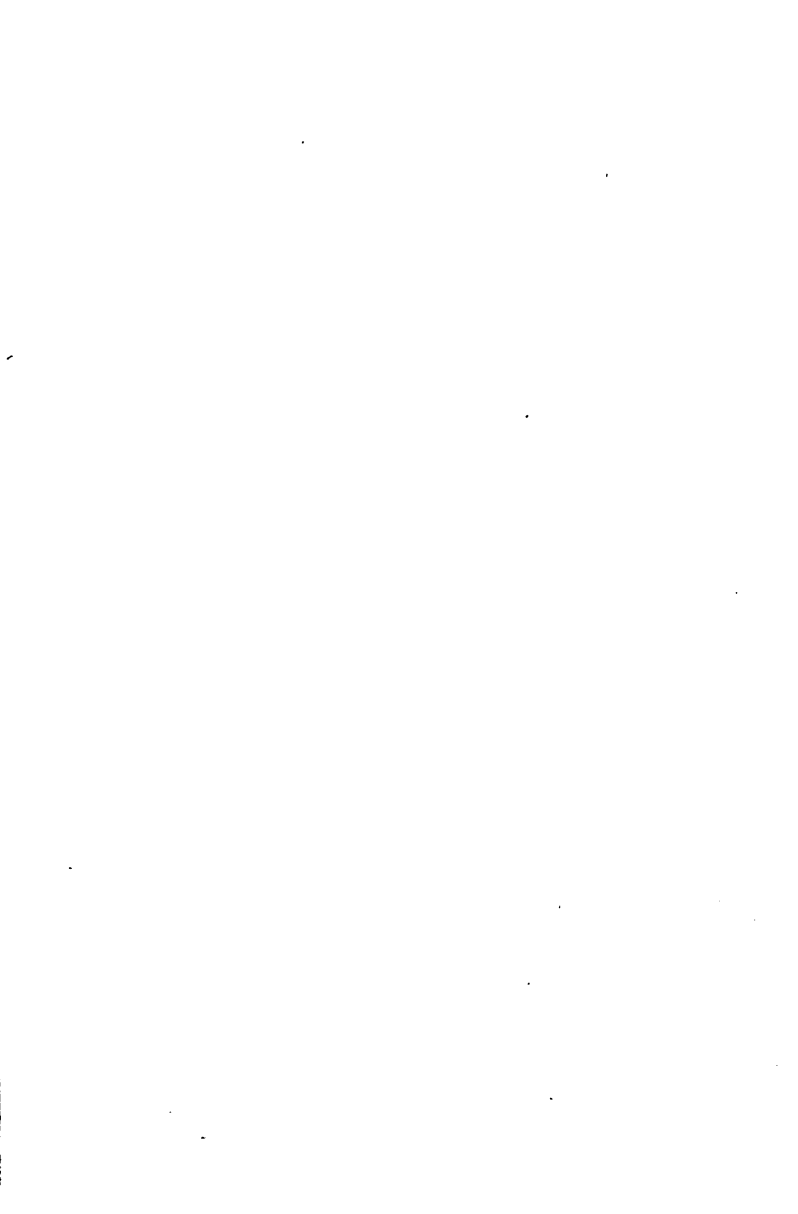


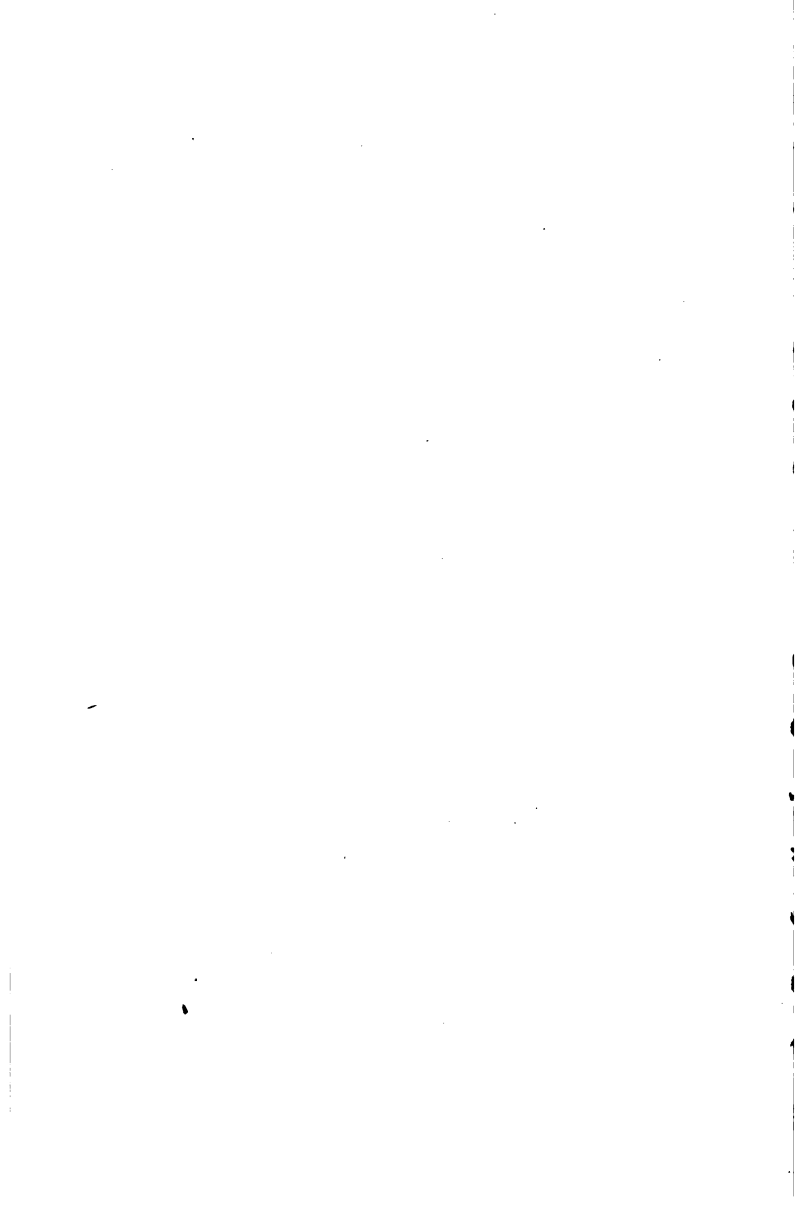
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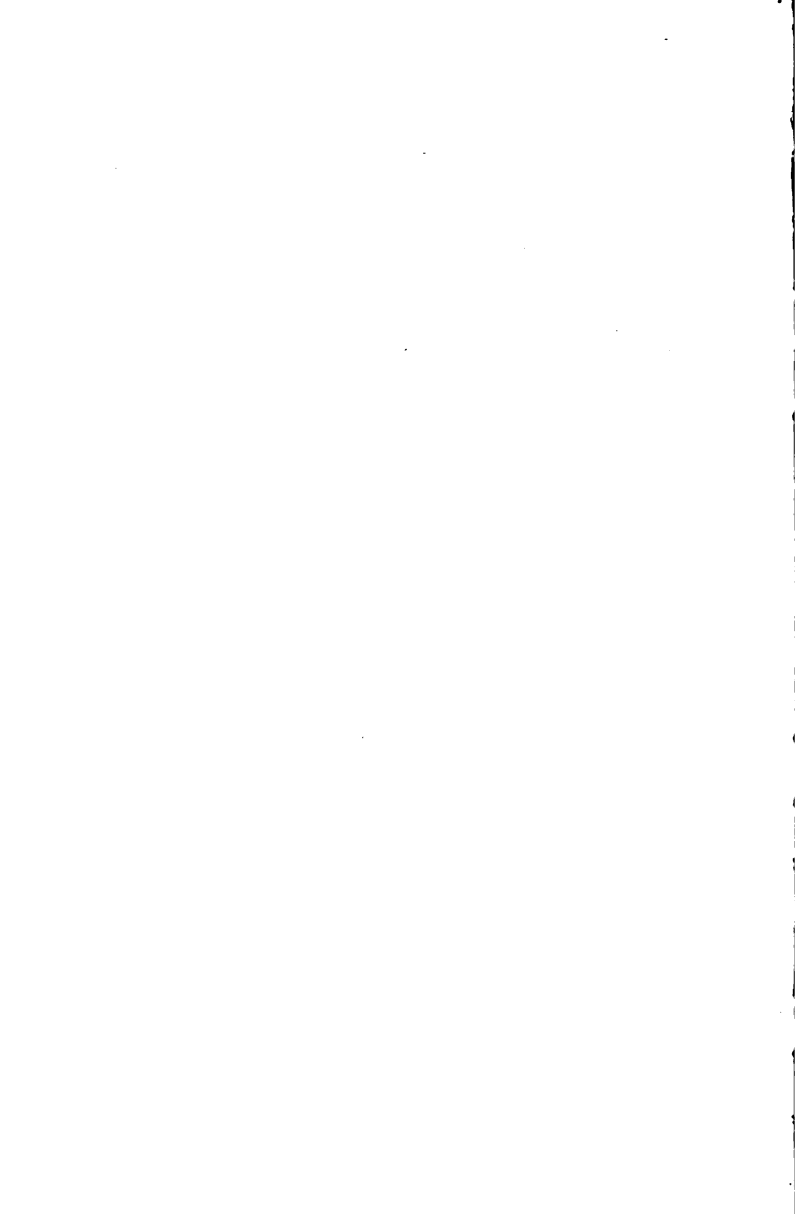


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LEISURE HOUR SERIES

ON THE HEIGHTS

A NOVEL

BY

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

TRANSLATED BY

SIMON ADLER STERN

VOL. II



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CHAPTER I.

THE summer was almost at an end when the court returned from the baths.

The king's first official act was to sign the proclamation of the Schnabelsdorf ministry, dissolving the refractory Chamber of Deputies and ordering a new election.

The king was displeased; and yet, that which now surprised him was the inevitable consequence of his previous doings. He had returned in high spirits, but, like an importunate creditor, the state was already thrusting its claims upon him.

He felt happy that his government met with popular approval; but that, he thought, should be a matter of course. And now a great question was to be submitted to the country, and there were doubts as to what the answer might be.

Schnabelsdorf exercised his great conversational gifts, and adroitly endeavored to humor the heroic side of the king's character. But his efforts were in vain.

The whole land was in great commotion, but of this they knew little or nothing at court. The autumn manœuvres had begun, and in a few days the court expected to move to the summer palace, after which, hunting in the Highlands was to begin.

The king had seldom taken so lively an interest in the manœuvres. The ease and precision with which, on such occasions, large bodies of men were moved at will, afforded a suggestive contrast to the spirit of disorganization and breaking away from authority which seemed abroad in the land. Nothing, however, was further from his thoughts than the idea of bringing the two opposing tendencies to bear upon each other.

At the court assemblages, the king always seemed to be in an exceptionally pleasant mood. The greater his ill-humor, the more he regarded it his duty to keep up the outward semblance of cheerfulness. The habit, acquired in youth, of always keeping up his dignity; the knowledge that the eyes of all were upon him; a due consideration for the claims of those about him; the need of always speaking the right word at the right time; above all, the art of ignoring—an art in which others refrain from indulging themselves, and which, for that very reason, requires practice—

and, added to this, the consciousness of possessing kingly power:—all this prevented him from betraying the slightest trace of ill-humor. He manifested a lively interest in whatever was going on, especially so, when Irma was present. She, above all, should never find him wavering, for she would have misinterpreted it. It was therefore necessary, in her presence, to keep up that exalted mood which regards dissent or contradiction as impossible, and thus esteems itself as above the law. And yet the king felt the danger of encouraging a secret passion while all his strength was required by a weighty problem, in the solution of which he would necessarily encounter great opposition.

Irma returned from her visit to the sea-shore, refreshed and invigorated. She was more beautiful than ever, but was rarely seen at court, as she spent much of her time with Arabella. On the day after Arabella had given birth to a boy, Irma and the Doctor left Bruno's house together.

Irma was about to say: "I am beginning to get tired of this everlasting nursery," but checked herself in time.

The Doctor did not utter a word, while accompanying her down the carpeted stairs. His features wore a serious expression. He had been living in the great world for many years, but, even now, it offended his sense of justice when he saw the joys of paternity fall to the share of one who, like Bruno, had led what is mildly termed a "fast life." The Doctor pressed the ivory handle of his cane against his lips, as if thus to prevent his thoughts from finding vent in words. Silently, he seated himself in the carriage with Irma. They drove to the palace.

"My sister-in-law has imposed a difficult task upon me," said Irma.

Gunther did not enquire as to the nature of the task, and Irma was obliged to continue of herself:

"She made me promise that I'd inform father of the birth of his grandson. If you were still on former terms of intimacy with him, you would be the best mediator."

"I can do nothing," replied Gunther, curtly. He was unusually reserved in his manner towards Irma. She felt conscious of this, and felt, too, that she no longer had a right to claim unreserved confidence on the part of her friends. But as she did not wish to break with those whom she esteemed, it was necessary to maintain relations of courtesy with them.

"I believe that Bruno's better nature will now assert itself," said Irma. She forced herself to speak, and trembled when she thought that the man who sat beside her might suddenly ask her: "What have you done with *your* better nature?"

The carriage stopped before the palace. Irma alighted and Gunther drove home.

Once in her room, Irma pressed both hands to her heart as if

to allay the storm within. "Must I beg every one to prove his friendly feeling by silence, or to admit that I am right? Those who despise the world's laws and have soared above them, had better cease to live." She aroused herself by a violent effort and began the letter to her father. She complained that she had had no news from him for a long while. She wrote about Arabella, informed him that Bruno had become a steady *paterfamilias*, and, at last, mentioned the birth of the grandson. She also wrote that Arabella begged for a few lines from the grandfather and that they would render her happy.

Irma found her letter a difficult task. Her pen usually responded to every varying phase of feeling; but, that day, it seemed to stumble and hesitate. She leaned back in her chair, and picked up a letter that she had found lying there. It was Walpurga's. She smiled while reading it, and enjoyed the satisfaction of having benefited a fellow creature who, although distant, held her in faithful remembrance.

The waiting-maid announced Bruno's groom. Irma had him come in. He had come to express his master's desire that the gracious Countess should at once dispatch the letter she had promised to write, and said that he had been ordered to take it to the post-office himself. Irma sealed it and gave it to him.

Bruno, seated in his dog-cart, was waiting at the corner of the palace square. The groom handed him the letter. Bruno put it in his pocket. He drove to the post-office and, with his own hands, dropped a letter into the box. This epistle, however, was directed to a lady. The one intended for his father he retained in his possession. He was determined not to humble himself, either through his sister or his wife.

The box into which Bruno dropped the perfumed *billet-doux* contained letters for old Eberhard,—letters which Bruno could not intercept.

CHAPTER II.

ON the very morning that his first grandchild was born, Count Eberhard was returning, with a light heart, from a walk in the fields. They had begun, that day, to gather the first harvest from a large, tray-formed tract of land which had once been a swamp. Eberhard had drained the desolate tract with great care and judgment, and now it produced unequaled crops. The sight of the ripened grain, waving in the gentle breeze, inspired him with pure and happy feelings, and he thought of the generations to come, who would derive sustenance from a tract of land rendered fertile by him.

He felt no desire to impart his happiness to another. He had accustomed himself, in the past, to live within himself. His

one real life-burden he had confessed to his daughter. He thoroughly enjoyed the repose which solitude alone affords. He imagined that pure reflection had conquered all passion. He always obeyed the inner voice of nature; there was no one for whose sake he was obliged to repress it. He had faithfully endeavored to perfect himself and, while placing himself beyond the reach of temptation, had, at the same time, withdrawn from social activity.

When he left his work in field or forest, it was to commune with those great ones who had long since left the world, and with whose profoundest thoughts he felt himself in full accord.

He had just come in from the fields and was about to repair to his library, there to converse with a spirit that had long since left this world. His step was steady, his mind was calm and placid. He could, at will, preserve a certain state of feeling, or resign himself to the guidance of a spirit living in another sphere. His life lay in two distinct spheres, and yet the transition from one to the other was never violent.

The impressions of the moment had already clothed themselves in words, and he was about to note them down in a little book which bore the inscription: "Self-redemption."

Entering the manor-house, he found a number of persons waiting for him in the great, long, harvest hall which was hung with garlands and wreaths. They saluted him as he approached. The village burgomaster, who had, hitherto, represented that district at the Diet, and many other persons of local importance were assembled there. The burgomaster was the spokesman of the party and stated that in the forthcoming election, it would be necessary to relinquish the field to blockheads and bigots, unless they could nominate a candidate whose high personal character and influence would secure them victory. Colonel Bronnen, who had been recommended by Count Eberhard, had refused to stand, and now Count Eberhard was the only one who could defeat the enemy. The electors said that they well knew what a sacrifice it would be for him to take part in the canvass. They had, therefore, waited until now, the day of the election, and they urgently entreated him not to withdraw at the eleventh hour.

"Yes," added the burgomaster, "you've drained a swamp and carried off the foul water; and now you must help us in this, too."

To their great surprise and delight, Eberhard, without further objection, declared his willingness to stand. He had succeeded in one undertaking, and, from a sense of duty, felt that he had no right to avoid assuming the greater trust now offered him. The old enemy was still in force, and it was meet that the old warriors should go forth to battle against him.

The friends left and, after giving a few orders to the servants, Eberhard followed. He rode a large, powerful horse, such as a

large, strong man requires. He caught up with his friends before they reached the town, and thus made his entry with quite a following.

He presented himself before the assembled electors. The hall was almost full. The people were astonished to see the Count, but the glances turned towards him were soon withdrawn, and much whispered conversation ensued. Making his way through the crowd, Eberhard walked up to the speaker's stand. Few stood up or greeted him. Why was it? At other times, the crowd would always make way for him; but to-day, he had to push his way through them. It almost vexed him, but he controlled himself. "This is the true effect of free thought; homage should not be bestowed according to custom and precedence; it should only be for those who have earned it. You are still an aristocrat at heart, and are still filled with pride of ancestry—pride in your own past." Such were the thoughts that passed through his mind, while, with a smile, he rejoiced in the victory he had won over himself.

The first one to mount the speaker's stand was the candidate of the "Blacks," as the popular party termed their opponents. He spoke with cleverness, but without fervor, and it was evident that his address had been carefully studied. He made several clever points, however, which were received with loud applause.

The retiring delegate came forward and, stating that he declined a re-election, proposed Count Eberhard of Wildenort, the tried champion of freedom and popular rights.

The assembly seemed taken by surprise. There was but little clapping of hands, and few bravos were heard. Count Eberhard was quite taken aback by this cool reception and looked about him in astonishment. The burgomaster whispered to him that this was a sure sign of victory, and that the enemy was confounded. Eberhard merely nodded. A strange feeling of embarrassment arose within him. He repressed it, and mounted the speaker's stand. With every step, he gained in courage and became more fully persuaded that it was his duty to defend the new trust without regard to thought of self. He began his speech by giving an account of his past life and struggles, adding, with a smile, that there were many present who, like himself, had gray hairs, and that there was no need of telling them what he desired. He was glad, however, to find that there were so many younger men present.

They listened with considerable patience. Among the opposition there was, now and then, loud talking which was, however, soon silenced. Eberhard went on speaking. Suddenly loud peals of laughter resounded through the assembly, and the words "left handed father-in-law" were heard. Eberhard did not know what it meant, and went on with his remarks. The talking in the crowd

grew louder. Drops of cold sweat stood on his brow. The burgo-master mounted the stand and exclaimed: "Whoever is n't willing to listen to a man like Count Eberhard, does n't deserve to have a vote."

Breathless silence ensued. Eberhard concluded with the words:

"I am proud enough to tell you that I do n't ask you for your votes. I simply say that I accept the nomination."

He left the assembly, but, before doing so, begged his friends to remain. He rode home, filled with the thought that he had separated himself from the world, instead of having conquered it.

He alighted as soon as he came to his own land in the valley, and gave orders to some of the laborers. When he returned to the road, he met the postman, who handed him several letters. Eberhard opened the first and read: "Your daughter has fallen into disgrace, and yet stands in high grace as the mistress of the king. To her the country owes the restoration of the ecclesiastical ministry. If you still doubt, ask the first person you meet in the streets of the capital. Unhappy father of a happy daughter." It was signed "The Public Voice."

Eberhard tore up the letter and gave the shreds to the winds which carried them far away over the fields.

"Anonymous letters," said he, "are the meanest things conceivable. They are far lower than cowardly assassination, and yet—" It seemed as if the breeze which carried the shreds away had now returned, laden with the expression that he had heard at the meeting. Had they not said "left handed father-in-law?"

Eberhard pressed his hand to his brow—the thought was like a burning arrow piercing his brain. He opened the second letter and read: "You do not care to believe how it stands with your daughter. Ask him who was once your friend. Ask the king's physician, on his honor and conscience. He will tell you the truth. Save what may yet be saved. Then will the writer of these lines divulge his name. From one who greatly esteems you. * * *"

Eberhard did not destroy this letter; he held it in his trembling hand. A mist suddenly rose before him. He passed his hands over his eyes as if to brush it away; but it still remained, growing denser with each succeeding moment. He tried to read the letter again, but could not distinguish a word of it. He crumpled up the paper and put it in his breast pocket, where it lay like a burning coal against his heart. His head swam and he sat down by the wayside. What could he do? They would smile if he went to court to fetch her. They would be very gracious and would say: "Let there be no scenes, no noise. Let everything be arranged quietly; let there be no scandal; decorum must be maintained." And one must smile, though his heart is bursting. We live in a civilized world, and this they call culture and good manners. Oh! you are well off. With you, all is pastime. You can afford to be

ever polite, ever cool and reserved. O, why did I come home to waste my powers in this miserable nook! It's all my own fault. I meant to rescue myself from the hurly-burly of the world. I've lost my children, instead. A satanic sophist lurks in us all. I persuaded myself that it was better, and more in accordance with nature, to let my children grow up, free from all control, and yet it was only a vain excuse for my own weakness. Because the duty of incessantly watching over them was distasteful to me, I suffered them to go to ruin, while persuading myself that their nature could thus best develop itself. And here I stand, and must fetch my child—

The sudden neighing of the horse, hitched to a tree near by, so startled Eberhard that he almost fell back. A laborer who was bringing two horses in from the field, stopped and asked: "What ails you, master?"

The laborer unhitched the horse. Eberhard rose hastily and, without saying a word, walked up the hill in the direction of the manor-house. He felt as if the air was filled with intangible, electric clouds that drew him back; but he forced his way through them. He reached the house and held fast by the doorposts. He was giddy, but still he did not give up. He went through the stables and barns, saw the men storing away the fodder, and remained looking at them for a long while. Then he went through the whole house and looked at every object with an enquiring gaze. In the great room with the bay-window, he lingered long before a picture of Irma, painted when she was but seven years old, a beautiful, large-eyed child. The attitude was natural, a mixture of childlike awkwardness and grace. The painter had wanted to put a nosegay in the child's hand, but she had said: "I won't have dead flowers; give me a pot with living flowers in it." Ah, she had had such pretty conceits! There she stood, the very picture of childish grace, with rosy cheeks, and with blooming roses in her hand. "A rose plucked before the storm could scatter its petals." These last words of Emilia Galotti passed through his mind. "No, I am not that strong."

He rang, but when the servant came, had forgotten what he wanted. The effort to collect his scattered thoughts seemed like plunging into chaos. At last he ordered the carriage, which was all he had wanted the servant for.

"The traveling carriage," he called out after the servant.

When he reached the library, he paused, and gazed at the door for a while. There were so many great and mighty minds in there—why did none of them come to his aid? There is no help but that we find within ourselves.

While descending the steps, he would, now and then, hold fast to the baluster as if to support himself. He drew himself up, as if filled with anger because of the weakness that mastered him. In

the courtyard, he gave orders that the carriage should drive on and meet him down in the valley. His speech was noticeably indistinct. Half way down the mountain, he suddenly seated himself on a heap of stones and looked about him.

What was passing before his eyes? What thoughts filled his mind? He looked for the tree which he had planted on the very spot where word was brought him of Irma's birth. This is the first soil trodden by her feet; these are the first trees she ever saw. The sky, the forests, the mountains, the blooming flowers, the merry birds, the grazing cows—all, all seemed like phantoms.—None of these will ever find you pure again. Never again dare you approach a living creature, or tree or flower; for they repudiate you, they are pure and you are—— The world's a paradise. You have been driven thence, and roam about, a restless fugitive. You may deaden your conscience, may smile and jest and dissemble; but the sun does not dissemble, neither does the earth, nor your own conscience. You've destroyed the world and yourself, and still live,—dead in a dead world. How is it possible? It cannot be. I am mad. I shall neither punish nor chastise you; but you must know who and what you are, and the knowledge of that will be your punishment and your cure. I shall palliate nothing; you must know, see, and acknowledge it all, yourself—

A road laborer went up to the Count and asked whether he was ill. He had noticed him sitting on the stones, and supposed that something might be wrong.

"Not well!" groaned Eberhard, "Not well? It would be well for me if I—"

He got up and walked away.

A grief-stricken mother can shed tears; a father cannot.

His head was bowed on his chest. He saw blooming roses; they should have adorned her. He saw thorns; they should tear her brow. Anger and grief struggled within him. Anger raged; grief wept. Anger would have lent him giant strength, with which to destroy the world; but grief crushed his very soul.

Suddenly he drew himself up, and, as if driven by the storm, ran down the road, over the ditch and across the meadow,—only stopping when he reached the apple tree.

"This is the tree—you're decked with ruddy fruit—and she—Woe is me! life is pitiless!"

A deep cry of pain escaped him. The road laborer above, and the driver who was waiting with the carriage below, heard him and ran to his help. They found him lying on the ground, face downwards. He was foaming at the mouth and was unable to speak. They bore him into the castle.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGHOUT the capital, schools, offices and workshops were closed. With the exception of, now and then, a noisy

group of men who soon entered a large building and disappeared from view, the streets were given over to women and children. It was election day. It seemed as if the thousand and one diversified interests and sentiments that help to make up the life of a city had converged to a single point—as if a great soul were communing with itself. Although it was in broad daylight, a wondrous silence rested upon the deserted streets. Gunther's carriage had just come from Bruno's house, and now stopped at the town-hall. The Doctor alighted, went up stairs and gave in his vote. In consideration of his being a physician in active practice, he was allowed to vote before his turn. He returned to his carriage and drove home. When he entered the sitting-room, his wife handed him a telegram which had just been received. Gunther opened it.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Madame Gunther, for she had never before seen so great a change in her husband's face.

He handed her the telegram and she read :

"Count Eberhard Wildenort paralyzed. Deprived of speech. Send word to son and daughter to come at once ; if possible, you also. "DOCTOR MANN, *District Physician*."

"You are going?" said Madame Gunther in an agitated, but scarcely enquiring tone. Gunther nodded affirmatively.

"I've one request to make," continued Madame Gunther. With a slight motion of his hand, the Doctor intimated that he wished her to proceed. He felt as if his tongue were palsied.

"I'd like to go with you," said she.

"I do n't understand you."

"Sit down," said the wife, and when Gunther had seated himself, she placed her gentle hand upon his lofty forehead. His face brightened, and she went on to say :

"Wilhelm, this is a terrible visitation. Let me do all I can to alleviate the grief of the lost child whom this dread message will soon reach. I can imagine her feelings. Who knows? Perhaps her own actions have been the cause of this.—Although she rides in her carriage, I shall assist her as faithfully as if she were a poor outcast ; and if the poor soul repels me, I shall not leave her. I do n't know what may happen, but the moment may come when she will feel it a comfort to rest the head now scourged by thorns, against a woman's heart. Do let me go with you?"

"I've no objection. For the present, however, you had better get everything ready for my departure." He drove to Bruno's house.

As soon as the latter noticed his sad looks, he exclaimed : "And so your party was beaten?"

"Not yet," replied Gunther, gently breaking the news to Bruno.

Bruno turned away, hurriedly gathered up several letters that were lying on the table and locked them up in his desk. He was soon ready to go with Gunther to Irma, to whom they broke the sad news as gently as possible.

"I knew it ! I knew it !" cried Irma. Not another word escaped her. She went into her bedchamber and threw herself on the bed ; but she had hardly touched the pillow before she sprang up as if thrust back, and then knelt on the floor and swooned away. When she returned to the reception room, her features wore a fixed, rigid expression. She gave hurried orders to her servant and her maid to prepare for the journey. The Doctor withdrew, in order to ask for leave of absence, and promised to procure leave for Irma, too.

"You ought to bid adieu to the queen, before you go," said Bruno.

"No, no !" cried Irma, vehemently. "I cannot ; I will not."

There was no servant in the antechamber. There was a knock at the door. Irma started. "Was the king coming?"

"Come in !" said Bruno.

Madame Gunther entered.

Irma could not utter a word, but her eyes seemed to ask : "You here ? and now ?"

Madame Gunther told her that she had heard the sad news, and would regard it as a proof of her friendship, if Irma would allow her to accompany her.

"Thank you, with all my heart," stammered Irma.

"Then you grant my request?"

"I thank you ; on my knees, I'll thank you ; but I beg of you, do n't make me talk much now."

"There's no need of your doing so, dear Countess," said Madame Gunther. "You've apparently neglected or forgotten me ; but in your heart, you've remembered me. And even if it were otherwise, there was one short hour during which we opened our hearts to each other."

Irma raised her hands as if to shield herself,—as if the kind words pierced her like so many arrows. In a soothing voice, Madame Gunther added : "I shall consider it a kindness, if you will allow me to be kind to you ; you have no mother and, perhaps—you will soon have no father."

Irma groaned aloud and pressed her hands to her eyes. "My dear child," said Madame Gunther, placing her hand upon Irma's arm. Irma started—"there are many of God's creatures on earth, so that the sympathy of those whom misfortune has spared may serve as a support to the afflicted, and as a light in the hour of darkness. I beg of you, do not be proud in your grief. Let me share in all that the next few days may have in store for you."

"Proud ? proud ?" asked Irma, suddenly grasping Madame Gunther's hand and as suddenly dropping it again. "No, dear honored Madame. I appreciate your affectionate motives. I understand—I know—all. I could calmly accept your kindness. I know—at least I think—that I, too, would have just acted as you do, if—"

"This is the best and the only thanks," interposed Madame Gunther, but Irma motioned her to stop, and continued :

"I entreat you, do not torture me. Your husband and my brother will accompany me. I beg of you, say nothing more. I thank you ; I shall never forget your kindness."

Gunther entered the room again and Irma said :

"Is everything ready? We have no time to lose."

She bowed to Madame Gunther; and would gladly have embraced her, but could not.

Madame Gunther, who had never, before this, set foot in the palace, had only come to succor a ruined one. Never had the thought of herself so filled Irma with anguish and remorse, as when this embodiment of loving kindness had held out her hand to her.

The thought that she no longer dared approach the pure pained her as if demons were tearing her to pieces. Her first impulse was to throw herself at Madame Gunther's feet. She controlled herself, however, and, looking at her with a fixed gaze, passed on.

The parrot in the anteroom spread out its wings, as if it, too, wanted to go along, and screamed : "God keep you, Irma !"

As if veiled in a cloud, Irma walked through the corridor. At the palace-gate, she met the king coming out of the park with Schnabelsdorf, who had a number of dispatches in his hand, and whose cheerful looks were owing to the news of victory which he had just received.

To Irma, the king and Schnabelsdorf seemed like misty forms. She wore a double black veil, for she did not care to gratify the idle curiosity of the court, by making a show of the face on which grief had done its work.

The king drew near. She could not remove her veil. He seemed far, far away. She heard his friendly and, of course, kind words, but she knew not what he said.

The king extended his hand to Gunther, then to Bruno, and, at last, to Irma. He pressed her hand tenderly, but she did not return the pressure.

They got into the carriage. Just as they were about to start, Irma, noticing Madame Gunther's hand on the carriage door, bent down and kissed it. The next moment they were gone.

They were silent for some time. After they had passed the first village, Bruno took out a cigar, saying to Irma, who sat opposite him : "I'm a man, and a man must calmly accept the inevitable. Show that you, too, have a strong mind."

Irma did not reply. She threw back her veil and looked out of the window. Her departure had been so hurried that she was just beginning to recover herself.

"You ought to have taken leave of the queen in person," said Bruno, in a calm tone. The long silence was irksome to him.

Such dark hours should be made to pass as agreeably as possible. When he found that Irma still remained silent, he added: "For you know that the queen's tender nature is so easily offended."

Irma still made no reply, but Gunther said:

"Yes; it were sacrilege to offend the queen. No one but a savage would dare to weaken her faith in human goodness and veracity."

Gunther expressed himself with unwonted energy, and his words cut Irma to the heart. Was it she who had committed sacrilege? And then the thought gradually dawned upon her: the queen is his ideal; the king is mine. Who knows whether the mask of intellectual affinity may not have served to screen—Quick as thought, she dropped her veil; her breathing was short and fast; her cheeks were burning. He who knows himself to be—must judge others—nothing is perfect—no one—She felt as if she must speak, and at last said: "The queen deserves to have a friend like you."

"I place myself beside you," said Gunther, calmly. "I believe that we both deserve the friendship of that pure heart."

"And so you believe that friendship can exist between married people of different sex?" enquired Bruno.

"I know it," replied Gunther.

At the first posting-house, where they came upon noisy crowds, the postmaster informed them that the election was going on, and that the contest was quite an excited one. The "Blacks" would certainly be defeated.

Bruno, who had alighted, asked the postilion:

"My noble fellow-citizen, have you exercised your sovereign right of voting to-day?"

"Yes, and against the 'Blacks'."

They drove on.

Bruno did not get out at the other stations. They were drawing near to Eberhard's district. While they were changing horses at the assize town, they heard loud cries of: "Long live Count Eberhard! Victory!"

"What's that?" enquired Gunther, putting his head out of the carriage door.

He was informed that, in spite of the "Blacks," Count Eberhard would prove the victor. The opposition had started a contemptible rumor, intended to disgrace the old Count. But, although meant to injure others, it had proved a stumbling-block to themselves; for every one had said: "A father can't help what his child does, and, for that very reason, greater respect should now be shown him."—Irma drew back into the dark corner of the carriage and held her breath.

They drove on without saying a word.

After they had started, Bruno said it was too warm for him in

the carriage, and that it did not agree with him to ride backwards. Still, he would not suffer Gunther to change seats with him. He ordered the carriage to stop and, telling the lackey to sit up with the driver, placed himself on the back seat, next to the waitingmaid. Irma took off her hat and laid her head back. It was heavy with sad thoughts. Now and then, when the road lay along the edge of a precipice, she would quickly raise herself in her seat. She felt as if she must plunge into the abyss; but, weak and feeble, she would fall back again. Gunther, too, remained silent; and thus they drove on through the night, without uttering a word.

At one time, the waitingmaid would have laughed out aloud, but Bruno held his hand over her mouth and prevented her.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was near midnight when the travelers reached castle Wildenort. The servant said that the Count was sleeping, and that the physician who lived in the valley was with him. The country doctor left the sick-room and came out into the antechamber to welcome the new arrivals. He was about to describe the case to Gunther, who, however, requested him not do so until he had himself seen the patient. Accompanied by Irma and Bruno, he went into the sick-room.

Eberhard lay in bed, his head propped up by pillows. His eyes were wide open, and, without showing the slightest emotion, he stared at those who entered, as if they were figures in a dream.

"I greet you, Eberhard, with all my heart," said Gunther. The sick man's features twitched convulsively, and his eyelids rose quickly and as quickly fell again, while he gropingly put forth his hand towards his old friend. But the hand sank powerless, on the coverlet. Gunther grasped it and held it fast.

Irma stood as if rooted to the spot, unable to move or utter a word.

"How are you, papa?" asked Bruno.

With a sudden start, as if a shot had whizzed by his ear, Eberhard turned towards Bruno and motioned to him to leave the room.

Irma knelt down at his bedside, while Eberhard passed his trembling hand over her face. It became wet with her tears. Suddenly, he drew it back, as if it had been touching a poisonous reptile. He averted his face and pressed his brow against the wall; and thus he lay for a long while.

Neither Gunther nor Irma spoke a word. Their voices failed them in the presence of him who had been deprived of speech. And now Eberhard turned again and gently motioned his daughter to leave the room. She did so.

Gunther remained alone with Eberhard. It was the first time in

thirty years that the two friends had met. Eberhard passed Gunther's hand across his eyes, and then shook his head.

Gunther said: "I know what you mean; you would like to weep, but cannot. Do you understand all I say to you?"

The patient nodded affirmatively.

"Then just imagine," continued Gunther, and his voice had a rich and comforting tone, "that the years we've been separated from each other were but one hour. Our measure of time is a different one. Do you still remember how you would often in enthusiastic moments exclaim: 'We've just been living centuries'?" There was again a convulsive twitching of the patient's features, just as when a weeping one is enlivened by a cheerful thought and would fain smile, but cannot.

Eberhard attempted to trace letters on the coverlet, but Gunther found it difficult to decipher them.

The sick man pointed to a table on which there lay books and manuscripts. Gunther brought several of them, but none was the right one. At last he brought a little manuscript book, the cover of which was inscribed with the title "Self-redemption." The sick man seemed pleased, as if welcoming a fortunate occurrence.

"You wrote this yourself. Shall I read some of it to you?"

Eberhard nodded assent. Gunther sat down by the bed and read:

"May this serve to enlighten me on the day and in the hour when my mind becomes obscured.

"I have been much given to introspection. I have endeavored to study myself, without regard to the outward conditions of time, standpoint, or circumstance. I perceive it, but, as yet, I cannot grasp it. It is a dewdrop shut up in the heart of a rock.

"There are moments when I am fully up to the ideal I have formed for myself, but there are many more when I am merely the caricature of my better self. How am I to form a conception of my actual self? What am I?

"I perceive that I am a something belonging to the universe and to eternity.

"During the blessed moments, sometimes drawn out into hours, in which I realize this conception, there is naught but life for me—no such thing as death, either for me or the world.

"In my dying hour, I should like to be as clearly conscious as I now am that I am in God, and that God is in me.

"Religion may claim warmth of feeling and glory of imagination as her portion. We, on the other hand, have attained to that clear vision which includes both feeling and imagination.

"In troubled, restless days, when I endeavored to grasp the Infinite, I felt as if melting away, vanishing, disappearing. I longed to know: What is God?

"And now I possess our master's answer: Although we cannot

picture God to ourselves, yet we have a clear idea or conception of Him.

"For us, the old commandment: 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself any image of God,' signifies thou *canst* not make to thyself any image of God. Every image is finite; the idea of God is that of infinity.

"Spinoza teaches that we must regard ourselves as a part of God—

"While endeavoring to grasp the idea of the whole, I came to understand what is meant by the words: 'The human mind is part of the divine mind.'

"A single drop rises on the surface of the stormy ocean of life. It lasts but a second—though men term it three score years and ten—and then, glowing with the light it receives and imparts, sinks again.

"Man, regarded as an individual, is, both by birth and education, a thought entering upon the threshold of the consciousness of God. At death, he simply sinks below that threshold, but he does not perish. He remains a part of eternity, just as all thought endures in its consequences.

"When I combine a number of such individuals or thoughts and term them a nation, the genius of that nation enters upon the threshold of such consciousness as soon as the nation begins to have a history of its own.

"Combining the nations into a whole, we have mankind or the totality of thought, the consciousness of God and of the world.

"I have often felt giddy at the mere thought of standing firm and secure, on the highest pinnacle of thought.

"May these thoughts inspire and deliver me in the hour of dissolution. There is no separation of mortal and immortal life, they flow into each other and are one.

"The knowledge that we are one and the same with God and the universe is the highest bliss. He who possesses this, never dies, but lives the life eternal.

"Come to me once more, thou spirit of truth, at the moment when I sink—

"Dust cleaves to my wings, just as it does to yonder lark, winging its flight from the furrowed field into ether. The furrow is as pure as the ether, the worm as pure as the lark—God yet dwells in that which, to us, seems lost and ruined. And should my eye be dimmed in death—I have beheld the eternal one— My eyes have penetrated eternity. Free from distortion and self-destruction, the immortal spirit soars aloft—"

When Gunther had read thus far, Eberhard laid his hand on his lips as if to silence him, and gazed intently into his eyes.

"You have honestly wrestled with yourself and the highest ideas," said Gunther, whose voice was tremulous with something more than grief at approaching death.

Eberhard closed his eyes. When Gunther saw that he was asleep, he rose from his seat.

He now noticed that Irma had been sitting behind the bed-screen. He beckoned to her, and she left the room with him.

"Did you hear everything?" asked Gunther.

"I only came a few minutes ago." Irma wanted to know the whole truth in regard to her father's position. Gunther admitted that there was no hope of recovery, but that the hour of death was uncertain. Irma covered her face with both hands and returned to the sick-room, where she again took her seat behind the bed-screen.

Bruno was with the country physician, in the great hall. As soon as Gunther entered, Bruno hastily arose and, advancing to meet him, hurriedly said: "Our friend here has already quieted me. The danger, thank God"—his tongue faltered at the words "thank God"—"is not imminent. Pray quiet my sister's fears."

Gunther made no reply. He saw that Bruno merely affected ignorance of the imminent danger, and Gunther was enough of a courtier to refrain from forcing the truth upon unwilling ears. He returned to Irma. Bruno followed him and endeavored to cheer his sister; but she shook her head incredulously. He paid no heed to this, but said that he wanted to gain strength and endurance for the sad trial that awaited them. What he really wanted was to ride out, so that he might be absent at the terrible moment. Since his presence could not make things any better, why should he expose himself to such a shock?

The morning began to dawn. The sick man still lay there, motionless.

"His breathing is easier," faintly whispered Irma.

A gentle, reassuring nod was Gunther's reply.

CHAPTER V.

WITH a firm tread, Bruno went down the steps. He had ordered the groom to lead his horse some distance from the castle and there await him.

"If there only were no such thing as dying," thought he to himself. While placing his foot in the stirrup, something tugged at his coat. Was it his father's hand? or was it a spirit-hand dragging him back? He stumbled; his coat had caught in a buckle. He loosened it and was just about to lift his riding-whip against the careless groom, when it occurred to him that such behavior was ill-timed. His father was ill, seriously ill, indeed, in spite of the family physician's reassuring words. No, it would not do to punish the servant now; it should not be said that Bruno had beaten his groom at such a moment. Fitz, who was putting the buckle to rights, stooped as if he already felt the whipstock across

his shoulders, and looked up amazed, when the master, in the gentlest voice, said to him: "Yes, good Fitz, I see that you've not slept any more than I have, and you're quite nervous. Lie down and rest for another hour. You need not ride out with me. Keep your horse saddled, however. I shall take the straight road through the forest clearing and, if anything should happen here, you or Anton can ride after me. At the foot of the Chamois hill, I shall turn back into the bridle-path and return by way of the valley. Do you hear? Do n't forget! And now you can go sleep awhile; but do n't unsaddle your horse. Do n't forget what I've told you."

Bruno rode off, and the astonished Fitz stood there looking after him, for some time.

Bruno took the road that led to the woods and in the direction of a clearing which was now used as a pasture. It was easy riding over the grassy path, and the morning breezes refreshed him.

The golden glow of morning trembled on every leaf, and sparkled on every dewdrop. The woods on either side were superb, and, with a self-complacent nod, Bruno said to himself: "How well he understood forest matters. No, I shan't be so cruel. I shall have the woods well looked after, and shall not cut down the timber."

He now reached a level stretch of road. He put spurs to his horse and set off at a gallop. Suddenly he halted, for the neighborhood was one with which he was not familiar. There had formerly been a swamp, and now there were broad fields, on which lay many sheaves of ripened grain.

Bruno turned towards the laborers who were binding the sheaves. The foreman told the young master that it was his father who had drained the swamp, and that this was now some of the best land on the whole estate. Offering Bruno a handful of the ripened ears, he said: "Take these to your father; I'm sure he thinks of us on his sick-bed."

Bruno declined them, and gave the foreman some drink money. He rode off, leaving word that he was going towards the Chamois hill, and instructing the foreman to tell his groom as much, in case he should come after him.

The farm laborers he had left behind him were driving home with the first crop gathered from the redeemed land, and the cracking of their whips was the only sound that broke upon the silence of the forest-solitude. He checked his horse's pace to a walk and, as no one could see him there, lit a cigar. When he reached the high level ground, he started off at a brisk trot. Sheep were grazing here, and Bruno did not fail to ride up to the shepherd and tell him what to say to the groom in case he should follow. It was a comfort to know that he had made it so

easy to find him. After he had passed, he turned involuntarily. As if to calm himself he patted his horse's neck and, drawing a tight rein, drew himself up in his saddle. The road again led through a clearing in the forest; the valley below was bathed in golden sunshine. Suddenly it occurred to him: "There are so many miserable beings whose constant care is how to manage to keep alive. Why can't one purchase their vital power and, adding their years to his own, live forever? The masses, stupid as they are, are right when they consider us as no better than themselves, for we must die of the same diseases they are subject to.—Here, all is life; tree and beast and man. There, in the castle, lies a man whose end is drawing near, and who may be dying at this very moment. Perhaps, even now, the air is wafting his last breath towards me—Where is it? Why does not a shudder pass through all that belongs to him? through every tree, and man, and beast? All that lived with him should die with him, for it is his. This wretched, miserable life—"

"I'm a poor woman, give me something," said a figure, suddenly emerging from the thicket. It was Zenza.

Bruno started as if a ghost had appeared to him. He put spurs to his horse and hurried off. His hair stood on end with fright, and it was long before he regained his composure.

In spite of this interruption, and without an effort on his part, his thoughts went back to the subject that engaged them at the moment when Zenza appeared upon the scene; but the old woman's cry of: "Give me something," was ever ringing in his ears. If everything were to die with its possessor, who would inherit? What is more peculiarly a man's own than his thoughts? and even they die with him—

"I won't think any more," said Bruno to himself. "Not now; to-morrow—the day after—some other time; but now I don't want to think."

He raised his hat, as if to permit his thoughts to escape; then he whipped and spurred his horse so that it reared and started off at a furious pace. The effort to maintain himself in his saddle drove what he regarded as gloomy fancies from his mind. He sat firmly, pressed his knees against the horse's ribs, and felt the better for the exertion. But, in spite of all, his thoughts would suddenly wander off to his father again. He felt a sudden shudder— This must have been the very moment—at that instant, his father must have breathed his last— Involuntarily, Bruno drew his hand back. His horse halted. He again put spurs to him, and galloped away as if to escape from his thoughts. Suddenly, a voice cried out:

"Stop, Bruno!" He shuddered. Whose voice could it be? Who would call him by name? Surprise and alarm had thrown him into a cold sweat.

"Who calls me?" he asked with pale, trembling lips.

"You can't get here."

"Who are you? Where are you?" cried Bruno. A cold shudder passed over him, and his horse snorted and snuffed the air. Was it true that witches lived in rocks? for the voice had come from the rock.

"Who are you?" repeated Bruno; "your voice seems—"

"Do you still know Black Esther? Turn back, or you're a dead man."

He heard something whizzing by him. Benumbed with terror, he sat upon his horse. At last he dropped the rein, looked at his hand, drew off his glove, as if to satisfy himself that he was still living, that it was yet day, that all was not a dream, or the product of wild imagination—

His horse went on at a gentle pace. Suddenly, it started to one side—there had been the report of a gun. Who could be hunting there?

Bruno had already gotten beyond the limits of his own domain. Who could now be hunting in the royal forests, where the chase was not to begin until next month?

With a complacent air, Bruno twirled his moustache. He again felt confidence in himself, and in his worldly wisdom. He felt for the revolver in his saddle-bag and calmly examined it to see if it was fit for use. The horse went on. Presently he saw a gun-barrel resting on a tree and directed against him, while a voice from behind the tree called out:

"Turn back, or you're a dead man. One—two—three—"

Trembling from head to foot, Bruno turned his horse's head. Behind him was the loaded gun, and, at any moment, a bullet might pierce him. The cold sweat streamed down his face; his eyes burned; he did not venture to raise his hand, lest the poacher behind him should misinterpret the movement and shoot him in the back. It was not until he had reached the rock where Black Esther had called to him and had so mysteriously disappeared, that he ventured to breathe freely. She had not forgotten his love and he would henceforward provide for her. He again put spurs to his horse, and hurried off without knowing whither. It was not until he reached tilled land and saw laborers at work, that he alighted and sat down on the ground.

The first feeling of safety inspired him with a good resolve. He would return and, bowing himself in repentance, ask his father's forgiveness. He would now promise to care for Black Esther, who had been the cause of the rupture between them. But he felt so weak that he could not rise, and a voice within him said: "You can't do it, you can't stand two such shocks in one day, and, besides, there's no hurry; the end will surely not come to-day. There will be time enough to-morrow, or later."

Feeling as if every bone in his body were broken, he, at last,

arose, and asked the people in the field where he was. He found that he was far away from the road.

If the groom were now to ride after him and not find him.

Bruno quieted his conscience with the knowledge that he had not meant it to be thus. Dire fate, and an almost inconceivable combination of terrors, had led him from the right road.

Here, no one knew him. Suddenly, he heard the sounds of music and saw several carriages, decorated with green boughs, driving along the road. "What 's this? a wedding?" he enquired of the peasant who had already given him some information as to the road.

"I do n't know, but I think they must be town folk, or else they could n't ride about in harvest time. May be they 're coming from the election."

Bruno again mounted his horse. When he asked for the nearest road to Wildenort, the peasant looked at him in surprise, and pointed to a bridle-path on which he could not miss his way. But Bruno, who had lost all taste for the woods, preferred keeping to the highway. He passed a long string of wagons preceded by a band of music with a flag of black, red and gold. He hurried by them, for he was not in a mood to listen to music.

CHAPTER VI.

EVEN before Gunther's arrival, Eberhard had been bled. Gunther had brought a small medicine-chest with him, and had hastily compounded some remedies which had relieved and quieted the patient. He was now sleeping. Great drops of perspiration stood on his brow. Irma still sat concealed behind the screen. She could see her father, but could not be seen by him. Drawing a deep breath, he awoke and looked about him. Irma hastened to him. He gazed at her fixedly, and then motioned her to open the window.

The day was bright and sunny; the cool, balmy breezes wafted the fragrance of the woods into the room. The cracking of whips was heard. Eberhard's features acquired a pleased expression, for he knew that they were now bringing in the first sheaves from the swamp which he had redeemed.

Steps were heard in the ante-chamber, and Gunther came in, accompanied by the farm bailiff.

"Come in," said he, "it will please your master."

With a heavy tread, the bailiff walked up to the sick man's bedside. In his right hand, he held some of the ripened grain, while, with his left, he beat his breast as if to force out the words:

"Master, I've brought you the first ears from our new field, and hope your health may be spared, so that you may eat the bread from it for many a year to come."

Eberhard seized the ears and, with his other hand, pressed that of the servant, who now left the room and went down to the barn, where he sat down on a sheaf and wept.

"Shall I remain with you, or would you rather be alone with your child?" asked Gunther.

Eberhard dropped the ears, and they lay upon the coverlet. He reached for Irma's hand. Gunther went out.

And now Eberhard dropped his daughter's hand, pointed to her heart and then to the ears of corn.

She shook her head and said: "Father, I do n't understand you."

An expression of pain passed over Eberhard's features and he placed his finger on his lips, as if grieved that he could not speak. Who knows but what he meant to say: "Good seed will grow from the swamp, if we rightly cultivate it; and out of your own heart, too, my child; out of your lost, ruined—"

"I'll call Gunther," said Irma; "perhaps he will understand what you mean."

Eberhard shook his head, as if in disapproval. His features betrayed something like anger at Irma's inability to understand him.

He bit his speechless lips and tried to raise himself. Irma assisted him, and he now sat up, supported by the pillows.

His face had changed. It had suddenly acquired a strange hue and an altered expression.

With a shudder, Irma realized what was taking place. She fell down by his bedside, and laid her cheek upon her father's hand. He drew his hand away.

She looked at him. With great effort he raised his hand—it was damp with the dews of death—and with outstretched finger he wrote a word upon her brow. It was a short word; but she saw, she heard, she read it. It was written in the air, on her forehead, in her brain,—aye, in her very soul. Uttering a piercing cry, she sank to the floor.

Gunther came in hurriedly. Stepping over Irma, he rushed to the bedside, lifted Eberhard's fallen hand, felt for the beating of his heart, started back—and then closed his friend's eyes.

The silence of death reigned in the room.

Suddenly, music was heard in front of the house. They were playing the melody of a national song and hundreds of voices called out: "Long live our representative, noble Count Eberhard!" Irma, who was still lying on the ground, moved at these sounds. Gunther strode past her and went out into the courtyard. The playing ceased and the voices were silenced.

Horse's steps were heard approaching, and Bruno entered the courtyard. He alighted. The sorrowful mien of Gunther and those about him, told him what had happened. He covered his face and leaned on Gunther, who led him into the house. When Gunther and Bruno entered the chamber of death, Irma had disappeared. She had shut herself up in her room.

CHAPTER VII.

HE who destroys his life, destroys more than his own life. The child that has afflicted a father sees his upbraiding hand rise from the grave.

My father has put the mark of Cain upon my brow ; a mark that can never be effaced.

Nevermore dare I look upon my face or permit the eyes of strangers to behold it.

Can I escape from myself ? My thoughts will follow me everywhere.

I am an outcast, forlorn, ruined.

Such was the dreary monotone that rang through Irma's soul, again and again.

She lay in the darkened chamber from which every ray of light was excluded. She was alone with herself and darkness. Her thoughts were like strange voices, calling her now here, now there. And it often seemed to her as if, with finger pointed at her, her father's fiery hand shone through the darkness.

She could hear Bruno's voice and Gunther's. Bruno wanted to ask her about many things, and Gunther wished to return to the city. Irma answered that she could see no one, and charged Gunther with a thousand greetings to all who loved her.

Gunther cautioned the family doctor and the maid to keep a careful watch on Irma, and also sent a messenger to Emma at the convent.

Irma remained in darkness and solitude.

The tempter came to her, and said :

"Why grieve yourself to death ? You are young, and the world, with all its beauty and splendor, lies before you. There is not the faintest trace of a mark upon your brow. The hand that left it is cold and stiff in death. Rise up and be yourself again ! The whole world is yours ! Why pine away ? Why mortify yourself ? Everything lives for itself ; everything lives out its allotted time. Your father completed his life ; do you complete yours. What is sin ? The dead have no claims on the living ; the living alone have rights."

While distracted by grief and doubts, she suddenly saw, arising through the darkness, the vision described in the New Testament, of Satan and the angel contending for the possession of the body of Moses.

"I'm not a corpse !" exclaimed she suddenly. "There are neither angels nor devils. It is all false ! In song and story, and from generation to generation, they've been handing down all sorts of fables, just as they do with children whom they lull to sleep in the dark.

"Day has dawned. I can draw the curtain aside, and the whole

world of light is mine. Are there not thousands who have erred as I have, and who still live happily?"

She felt as if buried alive in the earth. Fancy ever transported her to that one grave. She rushed to the window.

"Light! I must have light!"

She raised the curtain. A broad ray of light streamed into the room. She sprang back, the curtain fell and she again lay in darkness.

But she soon heard a voice that went to her heart. Colonel Bronnen had come from the capital to pay the last honors to Eberhard. He begged Irma—his powerful voice was thick with emotion—to permit him to mourn with her for the dead.

All her blood seemed to flow back to her heart. She opened the door and, through the darkness, held out her hand to her friend. He pressed it to his lips, and she heard the strong man weep. Suddenly, the thought flashed upon her that this man could save her, and that she could serve him, and look up to him. But how could she dare?

"I thank you," said she, at last. "May it ever make you happy to know that you've been kind to the departed and to myself—"

Her voice faltered; she could say no more.

Bronnen departed, leaving her in the dark.

Irma was again alone.

The last stay left her was broken. Had she imagined that Bronnen had picked up fragments of a torn letter which he had found on the road, and that they were now in his pocket, she would have cried out for very shame.

One idea constantly possessed her. What good would it do her to see the sun rise so many thousand times more? Every eye would make the writing stand out more clearly, and certain words had become undying torments to her. Father—daughter! Who would banish these words from the language, so that she might nevermore hear them, nevermore read them?

Her ideas seemed to move in an unfathomable void. Turn it as she might, the one and only thought was ever returning with crushing weight. It seemed exhausting and yet inexhaustible.

Then ensued that numbness of the mind which is best described as the entire absence of thought. Chaos reigned, and what lay beyond surpassed conception. "Let what will come, I shall submit, like the beast led out for the sacrifice and upon whose head the uplifted axe of the high priest is about to descend. Your destiny must be accomplished; you can do nothing but submit without shrinking."

Irma lay thus for hours.

The great clock in the hall was ticking and seemed to be saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father. For hours, she could hear nothing but the pendulum, which seemed to utter those words

again and again. She was about to give orders that the clock should be stopped, but forbore. She tried to force herself not to hear these words, but did not succeed. The pendulum still kept saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father.

What had once been subject to her caprice, now ruled her. "What have you seen of the world?" she asked herself. "A mere corner. You must travel round the earth, and let it be a pilgrimage in which you may escape from yourself. You must become acquainted with the whole planet on which these creatures who call themselves men creep about; creatures who dig and plant, preach and sing, chisel and paint, simply to drown the thought that death awaits them all. All is drowned in stupor—"

In imagination, she transported herself far, far away, with faithful servants pitching their tent in the desert; and if some wild race were to approach— While she lay there, half awake, half asleep, she heard the sounds of the tom-tom, and fancied herself borne away on the shoulders of others, and adorned with peacocks' wings, while savage, dusky forms were dancing around her.

What had once been a wild day-dream now possessed her, and her brain whirled in fancy's maddening dance.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was late at night. All were asleep. Irma gently opened her door and slipped out.

She went to the chamber of death. A single light had been placed near the head of the corpse, which lay in an open coffin and with a few ears of corn in its hands. A servant who was watching by the corpse, looked at Irma with surprise. He bowed to her, but did not speak a word.

Irma grasped her father's hand. If that hand had rested on her head to bless her, instead of—

She knelt down and, with burning lips, kissed the cold, icy hand. A distracting thought flashed through her mind: This is the kiss of eternity. Burning flame and icy coldness had met: this is the kiss of eternity.

When she awoke in her room, she knew not whether she had really kissed her dead father's hand or whether it was all a dream. But she did feel that her heart was oppressed by a burden that could never be cast aside.

The kiss of eternity! You shall nevermore kiss warm, loving lips—you are the bride of death.

She heard the bells tolling while they bore her father to the grave. She did not leave her room. Not a sound escaped her lips; not a tear fell from her eye; all her faculties were benumbed and shattered. She lay in the dark. When she heard the pigeons on the window-sill outside, cooing and flying away, she knew that it was day.

Bruno was greatly annoyed by his sister's eccentric behavior. He wanted to leave, and wished her either to accompany him or, at all events, say what she proposed doing. But, thus far, she had not replied. At length, equipped for the journey, he went into Irma's ante-room, where he found her maid reading a book.

Bruno had just stretched out his hand to pat her under the chin, when he suddenly remembered that he was in mourning, and drew his hand back.

He gave his hat to the maid, so that she might put a mourning band on it, and, while doing so, stroked her hand, as if by accident. Then he went to his sister's door again.

"Irma!" he said; "Irma, do be sensible; do give me an answer."

"What do you want of me?"

"Open the door."

"I can hear you," she replied, but did not open the door.

"Well then, I must tell you that no will has been found. I shall arrange everything with you in a brotherly manner. Won't you come along to my house?"

"No."

"Then I must go without you! good bye!" He received no answer and, while waiting, heard steps moving away from the door. He turned towards the waitingmaid who had in the meanwhile fastened the crape upon his hat. Bruno kissed her hand and gave her a handsome present.

He set out on his journey at once.

He was just as well pleased to travel without Irma's company. There would be no one to disturb him, and he could more easily give way to his own inclinations. His philosophy enjoined upon him the avoidance of all unnecessary grief; it could do no good, and would simply embitter life.

He was in a self-complacent mood. He meant to take the Wildenort estate to himself, on account of the name. It was, unfortunately, small and, unless he obtained a position under the government, it would not support him in a manner befitting his rank. If Irma should marry, which he hoped would be very soon, he would give her the assessed value of the hereditary estate as her dowry. Bruno returned to the capital, and the first time that he left his house was to visit the jockey club, which was now in session. By paying a moderate forfeit, he hoped to be able to withdraw his horses from the races which were announced to take place within a few days. He was in mourning and they would, of course, take that into consideration. On the way, he met Gunther and turned back. The Doctor was going to the palace.

Never had this man, who, at court, was looked upon as a stoic, shown such agitation as when he brought the news of old Count Wildenort's death.

He told the queen that Eberhard's last moments had renewed the spirit of his better days, and yet he could not refrain from adding that his departed friend had not attained the high point to gain which he had so honestly labored. For, at the last moment, he had felt the need of support from without, and was obliged to impress his mind anew with truths he had long since made his own. The queen was astonished at the Doctor, who could judge so sternly, even when most deeply afflicted.

"How does our Irma bear it?" cried she.

"Sadly and silently," replied Gunther.

"I think," said the king to the queen, "that we ought to write to our friend, and send a messenger to her." The queen approved of his suggestion, and the king said to the captain of the palace guard:

"The queen wishes to have a courier sent to Countess Irma at once. Pray attend to the matter. Send Baum."

The queen started with fear. Why had the king said that *she* desired to send a messenger? The suggestion had been his own and she had merely assented to it. She quickly silenced her doubts, however, and reproached herself that the suspicion she had once harbored had not yet entirely vanished. She went to her room and wrote to Irma. The king wrote, too.

Baum assumed a modest and submissive mien, while receiving orders to start at once as a courier to the Countess of Wildenort. He was to remain with the Countess, to be in constant attendance upon her, and, if she desired to travel, he was to accompany her until she should return to court.

When Baum set out with the letters, his face wore a triumphant expression. He was now on the point of gaining the great prize. He had been intrusted with a delicate commission, and he knew what he was about. He felt that they appreciated him, and that he understood them. He looked back towards the palace. The submissive air had vanished. Stroking his chest with his right hand, and holding the left up to his lips, he said to himself: "I shall return as a made man; I shall be lord chamberlain at least."

Baum arrived at the manor-house. The maid told him that Irma would receive no one.

"If she only had a good cry; her silent grief will kill her."

He knocked at Irma's door. It was long before an answer came. At last she asked what was the matter, and when she recognized Baum's voice, she was obliged to support herself from falling, by holding on to the latch of the door. "Had the king come, too?" she asked herself.

Baum said that he had come as a courier to deliver a letter from their majesties. Irma opened the door just far enough to enable her to put out her hand. She took the large letter and laid it on the table. There was nothing that she cared to learn from the world, nor could it offer her any consolation. No one could.

At last, towards evening, she drew back the clasps and broke the seal of the large envelope. There were two letters in it, one in the queen's handwriting, the other in the king's. She opened the queen's letter first, and read:

"My Dear, Good Irma:"

(It was the first time that the queen had written so affectionately. Irma wiped her face with her handkerchief and went on reading.)

"You have experienced life's greatest affliction. Would that I were with you, to press your throbbing heart to mine, and to kiss away your tears. I shall not attempt to console you, but can only say that I sympathize with you as far as it is possible to sympathize with griefs one has not yet known. You are strong and noble, and I cannot help appealing to you" (Irma's hand trembled) "to think of yourself and to bear your grief purely and nobly. You are orphaned, but the world must not be a desert void to you. There are still hearts that beat with friendship for you. I am glad—that is to say—I thank fate that I am able to be of some help to you in your sorrow. I need not assure you of my friendship for you, and yet, at such moments, it does one good to tell one's self so. I do not care to spend a single hour in pleasure while you are in affliction. All feelings are shared by us." (Irma covered her face with her hands. Recovering herself, she went on reading.) "Let me know soon what I can do for you. Come to me, or remain in solitude, just as your feelings dictate. If I could only enable you to enjoy the company of yourself as we enjoy it. You do n't know how much good you've done me. You have extended the domain of our perceptions and have thus enriched our lives. What nobler achievement can there be! Remain firm and remember that you may always depend upon the friendship of

"Your ever loving

"MATHILDE."

Irma laid the letter on the table and involuntarily pushed it far away from that of the king, which was still unopened. Years should elapse—aye, oceans should lie between the reading of the two letters; and yet how often had she listened to them both in the same breath, and looked at them with the same glance.

With a violent movement, as if in anger, she opened the king's letter and read:

"I am deeply pained to know that you, too, my charming friend, must learn that we are mortal. It grieves me to think that your lovely eyes must weep. If that which is noblest be capable of still further purification—and what mortal being is not?—this affliction must needs add to your noble-mindedness. I entreat you, do not soar too high, lest you leave us too far below you. Carry us with you, to the lofty regions in which you dwell."

Irma's features assumed a hard and bitter expression. She went on reading:

"If you mean to torment your beautiful eyes with tears, and your noble heart with sighs, for more than seven days, and desire to remain alone, pray send me word. Should you, however, wish to protract your mourning, and to recover yourself and another self, by travel, decide upon what direction you mean to take. Let it not be too far—not too far into the land of sorrow, a land to which you are a stranger. Be happy again and subdue your grief, cheerfully and speedily.

"Affectionately yours,

"K."

In the letter, there lay a small piece of paper with the inscription :
"Burn this as soon as read."

"I cannot live without you. If I lose you, I lose myself. Your presence is my life. I cannot live, except in the light of your eyes. I want no clouds; I long for the sunlight. Remember the world of thought that dwells beneath your plumed hat. Let that world have its sway. You must not be sad; you dare not, for my sake. You must be mistress of your grief, just as you are mistress over me. Be firm, put all grief away from you, and return to your

"KURT.

"The kiss of eternity! I alone can kiss away the sadness that clouds your brow. I can and I will."

Irma uttered a loud shriek, and then gave way to convulsive laughter.

"Can any lips kiss this brow? How would they relish the death-sweat which has already eaten into the flesh? How would that terrible word taste to the lips? Kiss it away! Kiss it away! I burn! I freeze!"

The maid heard the last few words, and endeavored to go to Irma's assistance, but the door was locked.

After some time, Irma raised her head and was surprised to find herself on the floor. She rose and ordered a light and writing materials. She burned the king's two letters, and then sat there for a while, with her weary head resting upon both her hands. At last she took the pen and wrote:

"*Queen!*

"I expiate my crime, in death. Forgive and forget.

"IRMA."

On the envelope she wrote the words "By the hand of Gunther,"
"For the queen herself."

Then she took another sheet and wrote:

"*My Friend:*

"These are the last words I shall ever address to you. We are treading the wrong path, a path full of peril. I expiate my crime. You do not belong to yourself alone; you belong to her and to your country. Death is my expiation. Life must be yours. Be at one with the law that binds you to her and to the state. You have de-

nied both, and I have aided you to do so. Our life, our love, has dealt terribly with you. You could no longer be true to yourself. But now you must again become so; and that, completely. These are my dying words, and I shall gladly die, if you will but hearken to me and to your better self. God knows we did not mean to sin; but we sinned, for all. My judgment is written on my brow; inscribe yours in your heart and live anew. All is still yours. I receive the kiss of eternity from death. Listen to this voice and forget it not, but forget her who calls to you. I do not wish to be remembered."

She sealed the letters and hurriedly hid them in the portfolio, for she was interrupted. Emma, or rather Sister Euphrosyne, was announced.

CHAPTER IX.

GUNTHER had sent a messenger to inform Emma of Count Eberhard's death and Irma's despair. The prioress suggested that Emma should hasten to her young friend to whom they owed so great a debt; and, as nuns were not allowed to travel alone, she was accompanied by a sister who was an experienced nun.

When the maid announced them, Irma started from her seat. This is deliverance! In the convent, shut out from the world, a living death—there shall you wait until they bear you to the grave.

Suddenly the old boatman's words flashed upon her: "A life in which nothing happens."

Her lips swelled with proud defiance. I shall not wait for the end; I'll force it. It was long before she answered the maid:

"My best thanks, but I do n't care to see or hear any one."

After uttering these words, Irma felt as if inspired with new strength. That, too, was over.

All was silence and darkness again, and the clock kept on saying: Father—daughter; daughter—father.

From the valley below, she heard the sounds of the vesper bell.

"It must be," said Irma to herself. She drew back the curtains and, looking down into the valley, could see the nuns, clad in their long black gowns, walking across the meadows. Her thoughts went out after them, as she said: "Farewell, Emma!" Then she called her maid and told her to give orders that a horse should be saddled for her, as she wished to ride out. She did not turn her face to the maid. No one should ever look on that brow. The maid helped her on with her riding-habit and riding-hat, the latter ornamented with part of an eagle's wing. Irma started when her hand touched the wing. The king had shot the bird, and had given her the plumes when—— It seemed like a parting, ghostly touch.

She ordered a double veil to be put on her hat, and it was not until she was in perfect disguise, that she set off. She did not

look up; she took leave of no one; her eyes were fixed on the ground.

Irma's saddle-horse stood in the courtyard. At her approach, it pawed the ground and snuffed the air. She did not stop to enquire who had brought her horse from the city. She patted its neck and called it by its name: "Pluto." In thought, she was already so far removed from the world that she regarded the beast as a marvel, or as something never before seen. She mounted.

The large dog, a favorite of her father's, was there also, and barked when he saw her. She gave orders to have the dog taken back to the house.

She rode away at an easy pace. She did not look behind her, nor to the right or left. The sun was already behind the tops of the trees. Its broken rays shone through the branches, like so many threads of light, and between the boughs glowed the sky, forming a golden background.

Irma halted and beckoned to Baum, who had been following her, to come nearer. He rode up.

"How much money have you with you?"

"Only a few florins."

"I must have a hundred florins; ride back and get them for me."

Baum hesitated. He wanted to say that he was not allowed to leave the Countess, but he could not muster courage enough to do so.

"Why do you hesitate? Do n't you understand me?" said Irma, harshly. "Ride back, immediately."

Baum was scarcely out of sight, when Irma whipped her horse, leaped over the ditch at the side of the road, hurried across the mountain meadow and into the woods. She rode at full gallop, over the very road Bruno had taken a few days before. The horse was spirited and fresh, and proud of its beautiful rider. They knew each other and it galloped on right merrily, as if in the chase. And there really is a chase; for hark! there's a shot. But Pluto stands fire, and is not so easily frightened. Away he dashed, more wildly than before. The rays of the setting sun shone through the forest shades, lighting up the trees and mosses with their roseate glow. And still she rode on, ever urging her horse to greater speed.

She had reached the crest of the mountain ridge; below, lay the broad lake, glowing with purple.

"There!" cried Irma. "There thou art, cold death!"

Pluto stopped, thinking that his mistress had spoken to him.

"You're right," said she, patting his neck; "it's far enough."

She alighted and turned the horse's head. He looked at her once more, with his large, faithful eyes, for she had thrown back her veil.

"Go home. You're to live; go home!"

The horse did not move. She raised her whip and struck it. It started off, with mane and tail fluttering in the evening breeze, as it hurried away along the mountain crest.

Irma paused and looked after it. Then she sat down on the edge of a projecting rock and gazed at the vast prospect and the setting sun.

"O light! O lovely sky! This is the last time I gaze upon you, before I sink into the night of death—"

For a moment, she was wholly absorbed in the view that opened before her. She no longer knew whence she had come, or whither she would go. Her eyes rested on the vast range of towering peaks, summit piled on summit, and, in the distance, a peak overtopping them all. The wooded heights seemed enveloped in a violet haze. The trembling rays of the setting sun gilded the bare and rugged cliffs. High upon the glaciers rested the rosy glow of sunset, ever assuming a brighter hue as it grew darker in the valley below. One mighty, snow-clad peak seemed as if on fire; but a cloud passed over it and, as if lifting a veil, carried the mountain's rosy glow with it. The cloud gradually disappeared in a blaze of glory, and the snowy peaks, standing out against the background of dull sky, looked cold and bleak, as if in death.

The mighty spirit of death was passing o'er the heights.

Oh! that one might thus vanish into thin air!

A chilling breeze swept over the mountain. Irma shuddered. She passed her hand over her face, and felt that she, too, was growing pale. She rose to her feet and ascended the mountain for some distance, so that she might once more see the fiery ball. She was too late and said aloud:

"Of what avail is it to see the sun a thousand, or twice a thousand times, as long as the day must come when it sets for us, once and for all? And it has forever set to him who lies under the sod and on whose hand decay—"

She felt giddy and sank upon the mossy ground.

When she got up again, it was night.

She arose and, holding up her dress, walked down into the dark and thickly wooded ravine below.

CHAPTER X.

IRMA advanced with a firm step. The footpath she had struck, wound its way among large and lofty trees and soon opened into a broad road that had been cut through the forest. Ever and anon heat-lightning would flash in the distance, breaking up the gloom and revealing another firmament that lay beyond.

Irma scarcely looked up. She thought of nothing but how to find her way. There was perfect silence, broken, now and then, by a sorrowful sound, like the sobbing of a human being. It

must be from ~~some~~² hollow tree, thought she. The groaning always seemed to advance before her. Wherever she went, she heard it. She looked for the heart-sick tree, but could not find it. With every step, she advanced further into the forest and higher up the mountain. Then she ran down the mountain, and now all was silent. The path was no longer visible, but, from afar, she caught a glimpse of the moonlit lake, the object of her search. She went on, through the pathless forest, treading down the soft moss. Sometimes she heard the twittering of birds in the tree-tops; a martin or a weasel was destroying the young in their nests. The world is full of murder, thought she; its creatures are ever preying on each other. Though man destroys and kills his fellow men, he does not eat them. That alone distinguishes man from the beasts. And there is one thing more—man alone can kill himself. Irma grew dizzy at the thought. She supported herself against a tree, for a moment, and then walked on. Her resolve must be carried out; there must be no weakness, no wavering. She went still further into the dense forest. Her cheeks glowed, the perspiration dripped from her forehead; but, inwardly, she felt as if freezing.

Something rustled through the thicket. It was a stag which she had frightened from its cover. The stag was afraid of her, and she was afraid of the stag. She fancied that she could feel its antlers piercing her. She hurried down the mountain side. For awhile, she could still hear the crackling of the underbrush, and at last all was silent again. The wind whistled through the tree-tops, and there was a sound of running water, sometimes near and sometimes afar, and then the roaring of a forest stream dashing down from the rocks. She beheld the moonlit foam, and no longer knew where she was or whither she was going—towards the lake, or away from it. If she were to lose her way in the forest—if she were to be found there and taken back to the world and misery! Mustering all her strength, she walked on. The cool night air blew against her face, but her cheeks glowed as if with fire. She pressed her hand to her brow; it seemed as if a hot spring was flowing from the spot which had been touched. She looked up to the stars and recognized the familiar constellations. She knew their position, but those great guides through infinite space do not help the lonely mortal who has lost her way in the heart of the forest. Irma thought of the nights when, under Gunther's guidance, her glance had roamed o'er the vast, starry expanse. But now all was annihilated, all greatness had fallen. Even her view of the stars was confined and obstructed. She tried to remember whether she had destroyed the letters or left them behind her. She thought she could remember having burnt that of the king; but how as to the letter to the queen? Torn by conflicting doubts, she was, at last, completely bewildered. Perhaps both letters would be found.—Be it so.

And then Walpurga's song passed through her mind.

If the good peasant woman who lives by the lake knew that her friend was thus groping her way through the woods, all alone, in darkest night, and with such dread thoughts for her companions—she would hasten to her aid, would draw her to her heart and would not let her go. Who knows but that, although far away, she is thinking of me now, dreaming of me and, perhaps, singing her song—sending it, like some invisible messenger, on the wings of night. How the poor creature will grieve when she hears of my death. Perhaps she will be the only one who will sincerely mourn for me.

Memories of many kinds floated through her mind. Years hence, some boatman, like the one at the island convent, will tell the story of the drowned maid of honor. What effect will the news of my death have upon others? None of them can help me, nor can I help them. Day after to-morrow they'll be playing, dancing and singing as usual. No one can keep another in remembrance. He who is absent has no claim on our thoughts. Life is as pitiless as death. She went further into the thicket, passing wild ravines on the way. The stones loosened by her tread tumbled over the precipice, and the dull, hollow thud with which they struck the earth below, told her how far they had fallen. The rocks on either side drew closer together, the mountain torrent rushed down over them and, all at once, she reached the edge of a precipice; further, she could not go. I will take the fatal leap and dash myself to pieces. But to lie there, perhaps for days, bruised and half dead. To die a lingering death! No!

She sought a path. A branch struck her in the face just where her father's icy finger had touched her.

"No; this brow shall nevermore see the light of day," she cried, holding fast with her hands, while trying to find a way along the edge of the cliff. Suddenly, she heard the loud voice of a woman singing. Irma drew a long breath, for it was a human voice—a woman's, perhaps that of a young and lovely girl, giving her lover a signal in the night. The sounds were repeated again and again, and grew more and more piercing, and, trembling with fear, Irma sat on the rock. She answered with a scream. She was frightened at the sound of her own voice, but she cried out again and again, for now there was an answer. The other voice seemed to approach; dogs rushed forth and were already surrounding Irma and barking, as a signal that they had found the prey. The voice came nearer and nearer.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"Here," answered Irma.

"Where?"

"Here."

"Up there?"

"Yes."

"How did you get up there?"

"I don't know."

"Keep quiet; do n't move and I 'll come."

"Yes."

Irma waited a long while, and at last some one appeared right below where she was sitting.

"So there you are," said the figure. She threw a rope to Irma, telling her to bind it round her body and then fasten the other end to a rock or tree, and slide down gently.

Irma did as she was bidden. During that one short moment, while she hovered between heaven and earth, a thousand indescribable thoughts passed through her mind. She reached the ground in safety. The woman at once seized her by the hand and led her away. She followed, as if without a will of her own. In scrambling through the bushes and over the rocks, she tore herself until the blood flowed. At last they reached a narrow rocky path. Below them the brook rushed by, but the powerful woman held Irma's hand fast in hers, as if with an iron grip.

"A chamois hunter would n't dare go where you 've been. Now we 're up here, and there 's our hut," said she, at last. "It 's a wonder you did n't stumble over the rock with your long dress."

"Who are you?" asked Irma.

"Tell me first, who you are, and how you got here."

"I can't tell you that."

"No matter. They call me Black Esther."

"Who are you bringing there?" called out a grim-looking woman, who appeared at the door of the hut. Behind her, glowed the fire on the hearth.

"I don't know; it 's a woman."

Irma went towards the hut with Black Esther. The old woman crossed herself and exclaimed:

"Let all good spirits praise the Lord! it 's the Lady of the Lake—"

"I 'm not a spirit," said Irma. "I 'm a weary mortal. Let me rest here for awhile, and then let your daughter go with me and show me the way to the lake. All I ask for now is a drop of water."

"No, that 'ud be the death of you. You must n't drink water now, I 'll cook some warm soup for you, and bring it to you right off."

She led Irma into the room, and when she saw her hand and the diamond rings sparkling on it, she grinned with delight.

"Oh what a beautiful ring! That 's from your sweetheart."

"Take it and keep it," said Irma, holding out her hand.

With great dexterity, the old woman removed the ring from Irma's finger.

"Good heavens!" cried the old woman, suddenly, "I've seen you before—yes, yes, it was you. Did n't you once wear a little golden heart and send it to a child? Did n't you once, at the palace, order them to get something to eat for an old woman, and have her son set free, and did n't you give her money besides? Good heavens! you're the—"

"Do n't mention my name! Only let me rest a moment; ask me nothing, and say nothing more."

"As you do n't want me to, certainly not. I'll hurry and get the soup ready for you."

She went out, leaving Irma alone.

Irma lay on the bed, which was nothing more than a sack of leaves that crackled strangely whenever she turned her head. The leaves seemed to say: "Ah! when we were green, we had a better time of it—" The moon shone in through the window; everything seemed dancing before her eyes; she felt as if she were on the open sea. But she soon fell asleep.—When she awoke, she heard a man's voice.

CHAPTER XI.

OUT on the porch, which also served as a kitchen, were Thomas and his mother. He had removed his false beard, was cleaning his black face, and now said:

"Mother, do you know what I'm sorry for?"

"What for?"

"Why, that I did n't shoot the young Count, the other day. I won't have as good a chance at him again." I could have shot him through the back of the neck and that would have been the last of him. I'd have given the daylight a chance to shine through him."

"You're a nice fellow to talk repentance."

"Yes, and I'd have done a good deed if I'd shot the fellow. Just think, mother, that's the kind of people the grand folks are who own the forest and all the game in it. Just think of it, mother! I'm a good fellow, after all."

"How so?"

"Only think, mother! Do you know why the Count was in the forest? He wanted to be out of the way while his father was dying; and so he rode off and let the old man end his days alone. I promise you, if you were going to die, and I were about, I'd stay with you to the last. I'd deserve to go to heaven, if I'd put that fellow out of the way. If I'd known all about it at the time, I'd have done it, too. Indeed I did want to, just for the fun of the thing. But it's great fun to think how the fellow must have shook, to be riding in front of me while I had a ball ready for him and could have shot him at any minute. Oh, you Wildenort!"

At the mention of her family name, Irma fell over as if shot and, with bated breath, listened while Thomas continued :

"Since then, I've been as if bewitched. I have n't chanced across a bit of game and I feel like a fool. Something happened to me about twilight—the devil take it, one can't help believing in spirits. Mother, I saw a beautiful horse, and no one was on it. If it had only been a real horse, one that would fetch money ! But I, like a fool, was frightened when it galloped past me, with its flying mane and clattering hoofs. But, before I'd made up my mind that it was a real horse and that ghost stories were stupid stuff—heigho, it was gone."

"Nay, Thomas, take care ! There's something in those stories after all. Come, stand here, hold your hand over the fire and swear that you'll keep quiet, and I'll tell you something."

"What do you happen to know?"

"More than your thick head can hold. I tell you there *are* spirits, and the Lady of the Lake is lying on the bed in there."

"Mother, you've gone crazy."

"Take care ! she's ordered me to cook some soup for her."

"And so the water-fairies eat soup. I'm not afraid of any creature that eats cooked victuals. I'd like to take a look at the Lady of the Lake."

The old woman tried to keep him back, but he forced his way into the room. When he beheld Irma, he stood still, as if rooted to the spot. Suddenly, he exclaimed :

"She's a woman like yourself, only she's much handsomer. If she were the Lady of the Lake, she'd have swan's feet, as far as I know. Mother, who is it?"

"I do n't know."

"Then I'll ask her."

The old woman tried to restrain him, but Irma had already risen to her feet. She looked about her with a vacant stare and and opened her lips, but could not speak.

"It's you !" cried Thomas, suddenly. "That's splendid."

He wanted to seize her, but Zenza held him back.

"It's you !" he cried again. "You've lost your way and here you are ; that's splendid."

"Do you know me?"

"Why, who does n't know you ? you're the king's sweetheart and now you're—"

Irma's loud shriek of despair drowned the last words of the brutal fellow.

"Hurrah !" shouted Thomas. "Out with you, mother ; and you, too, Esther. I do n't need either of you."

"Let her go ! You shan't touch her," cried the mother.

"Shan't I ? and who's to hinder me?"

The mother struggled with him, but he hurled her aside. Un-

able to think of any other expedient, she seized the vessel of boiling broth and swore that she would dash it in his face. He warded it off and staggered back, bellowing like a bull.

Esther rushed up to Irma and hurriedly whispered :

"Come, come ! I'll save you, for your father's sake. Come ! Away !"

She dragged Irma away with her, and with breathless haste they ran down the hill. Irma was out of breath and wanted to rest. Esther, however, dragged her a little further, until they reached a spring, where they seated themselves. Dipping up some water in her hands, she bathed Irma's brow and her own.

For some time, neither of them spoke a word. At last, Irma asked :

"Do you know the way to the lake ?"

"Very well. That's my path, too—the only one left me."

"How ? what do you mean ?"

"I want to do just what you mean to do, and I suppose I'll have to."

"What do I mean to do ?"

"To drown yourself."

Irma started with surprise when she found her purpose known.

"I do n't know why," continued Esther, "but I can easily guess. My brother spoke bitter words to you ; but, I beg of you, do n't do it. Just think of it ! You're so beautiful, so young, so rich. You may live for many years, and things may be much better for you in the world. Do n't do it.—Hush !" said she, interrupting herself, "do n't you hear something ? We'll stop talking, so as to hear every sound. He's following us, and won't leave us. Get up ! we must be off."

They got up and walked on further through the gloomy forest.

A vision of hell passed through Irma's mind. Through all eternity, the noble and the lowly would be linked to each other and suffer a like fate ; for sin, like virtue, knows no such distinctions.

They were passing a wild, roaring stream, when Esther asked :

"So you're his sister ?"

"Whose sister ?"

"My Bruno's. How goes it with him ? I saw him the other day, when I was looking for ants' eggs, but he did n't see me. Is it true that he's married happily ?"

"Yes. But why do you call him your Bruno ?"

"Well, I'll tell you. You're the first one who's heard his name pass my lips since that day. Has he never mentioned it to you himself ?"

"No."

"He can't have forgotten it. Come on ! Thomas might find us here. Take my hand and go backwards ; then the dogs will lose the scent."

Esther took Irma by the hand and led her away. After they had seated themselves under a projecting rock, Black Esther thus told her story :

"My mother knows nothing of it, nor does my brother. No one knows the right story ; but I can tell you. This is n't our real home, but we're often here in the summer, looking for gentian, and herbs, and ants' eggs. I was fifteen years old, a merry devil of a girl, and could have run a race with any stag, when your brother found me in the woods. He was handsome—very handsome. There never was another man in all the world so beautiful as he was. He was so clever and so good, and we loved each other so much ; and I cried every time I had to go home to my mother again. I would have liked to stay out in the woods, just as the deer did ; and it almost pleased me when I got home and mother gave me a beating, for then I could cry without having to give a reason for it. I longed for him every moment, and never wanted to leave him. He once told me who he was, and that his father was a very stern man, and that, if it were n't for that, he'd take me home to his castle, and make a countess of me. And what do you think I did?—I've thought a thousand times since of how foolish I was, but I'm sure I meant no harm. As Bruno had complained so bitterly, I thought this bad father might be brought around ; so I went to the castle, and went right up to him and told him that he ought n't to be so cruel and hard-hearted, and that he ought to allow Bruno to marry me, and I'd surely be a good daughter-in-law, and that there had never, in all the world, been truer love than ours. And your father gave me a glance—I'll never forget his eyes. I can see them before me now, so large and bright. And a little while ago, when Thomas started towards you, you had just such eyes, and that made me take pity on you and help you away."

"Go on," said Irma, after a long pause.

"Ah, yes," replied Esther, collecting her thoughts. "And then your father came towards me. I stooped, for I thought he was going to strike me ; but he put his hand on my head and said : 'You're a good child, even if you've done wrong, and it shan't be my fault if you do n't keep good.' Then he called a servant and ordered him to go for Bruno. When Bruno came in and saw me, he was frightened ; but I said : 'Do n't be afraid ; you're father's a kind-hearted man, and he'll let me have you for a husband.' Bruno did n't stir from the spot ; his face was as white as the cloth on the table he was leaning against. And then your father said : 'Very well, so I'll come to you. You've not acted honorably, but you shall still have a chance to do so. I permit you—nay, I command you—to take this child of the forest for your wife—' Bruno laughed—it was a devilish laugh, and I'll never forget it—and your father said : 'Speak, Bruno.' Then he said : 'Father,

do n't be ridiculous,' and your father's face changed as suddenly as if he had grown thirty years older in that one minute. He could hardly stand, and sat down on a chair. 'What do you say?' he asked. 'Repeat it once more! Speak!' And Bruno repeated his words, twisting his moustache while he spoke. Your father tried to persuade him, and told him that he'd teach me, that I should learn to read, and write, and do everything else, as well as any countess, and that Bruno had better not take a load upon his conscience which he'd never get rid of as long as he lived. And Bruno answered: 'If you don't send that girl away, I'll leave the room. Go, Esther. Leave the room, and do n't come again till I send for you.' He said something to your father, in a language I did n't understand. Your father grew pale, came up to me, gave me his hand, and said: 'Go, Esther.' He did n't say another word, but that he said kindly. And so I went away. That was the last time I ever saw Bruno. I heard, afterward, that there had been terrible goings on between your father and him, but I kept out of sight, after that. I did n't want to be the cause of ill feeling between father and son; I saw that it would n't do. Our child meant kindly towards us, for it was born dead. That was far better than to find only misery in the world, and die at last. Do n't you think so, too?"

Irma did not answer, but she felt for Esther's hand.

Esther continued:

"Mother and Thomas do n't know that I ever knew your brother. But Thomas is a terrible fellow, and he hates your brother just as if he had a notion of it; but I don't say a word. I'm lost; but what does it matter? There's no need of his being ruined too. Oh! how I loved him. I can't forget it, even now."

Esther who had, thus far, told her story in a calm and quiet tone, suddenly cried out:

"He's got a beautiful, fine, rich, noble wife! Yes, that's all we are here for—so that nothing may happen to you in your silken beds out yonder. Ha! ha! ha! And when they get a child in wedlock, they get some poor woman to suckle it. Walpurga's well off; her milk's turned to gold. Oh, if I could only stop thinking."

She tore her hair and gritted her teeth. "It's a wonder that the wild and burning thoughts that pass through my brain have n't burned away the stupid black hair long ago. Oh, my head's burning, and I get blows on it every day. But it's hard—just feel—it's as hard as steel."

Irma stood there, as if rooted to the spot.

"Hush!" said Esther. "Hush. I hear the dogs. I told you he'd hunt for us. Fly! fly! there, to the right! that's the path; but, I beg of you, for the sake of everything in the world, do n't

do it—do n't do it! You have n't gone far enough for that. But, be off. Down there you'll come to a small, wooden bridge. Cross it and hurry on. I'll stay here; the dogs will come to me and I'll detain them. You're saved. Away! Away!"

She urged Irma away, and remained behind.

Irma hurried on, alone. She often pressed her hand to her brow. Grateful remembrance of her father had saved her from unspeakable horror. When his hand rested on Esther's head, it had been in token of forgiveness. But the characters he had branded on Irma's brow, told her that he had forever put her away from him. "The brand upon my brow can only be cooled by the waters of the deep lake," she kept saying to herself, while she hurried across the wooden bridge, and then over the rising ground until she again entered the dark forest.

Black Esther stood her ground quietly, and waited for the dogs to approach. She called them, and they ran towards her. She heard Thomas whistling, and the dogs answering. He was still far off, but he was on the right track. She counted every pulsation; for with every heart-beat, Irma was one step further from where her pursuer must halt. She was willing to suffer all. What did it matter?

"Yes, yes; I know you're fond of me," said she to the great wolf-dog, that fawned upon her. "Yes, you're the only creature in this world that loves me. I wish I'd been a dog, too. Why was n't I born a dog? If it were only true, as mother says, that there once were times when people were changed into other beings."

Thomas's whistle and cry were again heard. The dogs answered. He drew nearer and soon stood beside her.

"So it's you, is it? I thought as much. Where's the other one?"

"Where you'll never find her."

A cry of pain resounded from the woods.

"Kill me at once!" cried Esther. The dogs howled, but knew not which of the two they would help.

Thomas went off, leaving Esther lying where she had fallen.

CHAPTER XII.

ON the soft moss under the trees near the border of the forest, a beautiful female, clad in blue, lay stretched in sleep. The trembling sunbeams played about her face. She awoke, and, resting her head upon her hand, gazed about her with the air of one to whom all is lost.

The air was laden with the odor of pines, and fresh, cooling breezes were wafted from the lake. The bells of the browsing cattle were heard from the neighboring hills. The dew glistened;

every object was radiant with light ; but to her, all was night. It was long before she realized that she was awake, or where she was. At last, she became conscious of herself ; but still she moved not. Sad and gloomy thoughts passed through her mind. Why awake ? Oh, pitiless nature ! why cannot the soul's anguish destroy thee ? Why is it necessary to use another force—fire, water, steel, or poison—to oppose thee ? Why is it that the soul can ruin the body, and yet cannot destroy it ? Sun ! what dost thou want of me ? I want thee no longer ! My father's writing burns my brow. Conscience hammers at me, as if with a thousand fists, and yet does not destroy me !—Why is this ? Why ?

She closed her eyes and turned away from the sun. Something whispered to her : "There's time yet. It may all prove to be a hellish adventure, a waking dream. Turn back ! You can, you may. You have fully expiated all."

As if moved by some invisible power, she again turned towards the sun. Below her lay, the glittering lake, and its waves seemed to say : "In these depths, all thought, all trouble, all fear, all doubt is at an end."

She arose, and when she saw the impression her figure had made in the moss, she looked at it for a long while. Thus, thought she, does the stag look at his nightly couch when the fatal shot has struck him. Are we better than the hunted beasts of the forest ? All is vanity ! What use is there in torturing ourselves ? One bold plunge will end all. She put on her hat and walked away, alone in the world with the one idea that possessed her. No voice dissuaded her ; she was mistress over life and death.

The blackberry bushes caught her dress and held her fast, and, while extricating herself, the thorns scratched her hands and feet. She felt a sense of gnawing hunger, and wept like a forsaken child.

Tears came to her relief.

Just then, she saw more berries, which she plucked and ate with eager appetite. Startled by her, a bird and its mate flew up from among the blackberry bushes. There was the empty nest. Every creature has its home. Irma stood there for some time, quite forgetting herself. She turned her head,—and, behold ! beside the blackberries, there were poison berries, belladonna—he who hungers for death can feed on these. Irma did not pluck the deadly fruit. She did not care to die a death of slow torture, perhaps to swoon away, to fall into the hands of men again. No ; it must be in the bottomless lake.

Irma now hurried off, as if she had been loitering by the way. The dew moistened her wounded feet ; she shivered with cold.

Suddenly, the bright sounds of music and the flourish of trumpets were borne upon the breeze. Irma pressed her hand to her brow—it is n't music, it is only the play of my frenzied imagination.

The world's pleasures are tempting me and calling me back with violin, clarionet and trumpet. "Come, soothe yourself with our sounds; be merry and enjoy the days allotted to you." But listen! The sound is heard again, accompanied by the discharge of cannon, whose reports are echoed back from the mountains, again and again. Perhaps they are celebrating a wedding in some quiet village on yonder shore. A youth and a maiden who have loved each other truly, have to-day become united, and music and cannon call out to the mountains: "Rejoice with us; love's happiness is as eternal as ye are—" Irma walked on, lost in reverie and looking down on the ground. Her thoughts were with the happy ones. In imagination, she saw the glad looks of parents, of comrades, of friends and heard the priest's benediction; while she walked on through the dewy grass and briars. Her hand was firmly clenched, as if she felt obliged thus to hold fast to the resolve that urged her onward. She walked along by the lake. The shore was flat, a mere reedy swamp. There could be no sudden ending there; only a slow, miserable death. She walked round and round, ran to and fro with hasty step and bated breath. At last she saw a rock extending to the water's edge. It was steep, almost perpendicular. She climbed up to the top, raised her hands, leaned over the edge. But hark! Who called to her from the water? She heard a shriek of anguish, a cry for help, a splash. In her excitement, she dropped her hat. It rolled over the edge of the rock and into the water. She saw a human figure wrestling with the waves. It rose to the surface—it was Black Esther! It rose once more and then sank out of sight. . . . Uttering a wild shriek, Irma sank upon the rock. She had seen the deed she purposed enacted before her very eyes. Her limbs seemed palsied and she lay there as if at the bottom of the lake. She was conscious, and yet could not raise herself. A voice called within her, but no sound passed her lips.

And while she lay there, she heard voices singing:

Ah, blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee;
And swiftly speed the hours by,
When thou art near to me.

She sprang to her feet. What could it be?

As if impelled by some unseen power, she hurried down from the rock. She wiped the tears from her eyes, and blood was streaming from her face. Had she been weeping tears of blood? A large boat was approaching. It drew nearer and nearer.

It is Walpurga's voice. It is she who calls. She comes—she recognizes her friend. Irma flees. Walpurga leaps ashore—pursues her—Irma tries to escape—Walpurga at last overtakes her and clasps her in her arms, while Irma falls fainting upon her breast.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE blood was streaming from a wound in Irma's forehead. Walpurga knelt down beside her and, divesting herself of her neckcloth, bound the bleeding brow. She then gathered some wet grass and shook the dew in Irma's face. In despair, she cried: "Dearest Countess! dear, good, beloved Countess! do wake up! For God's sake, what's the matter? Oh! for God's sake, wake up! Irma! Irma!" Irma opened her eyes.

Hansei's voice was heard calling: "Walpurga! Walpurga, where are you?"

"Is that your husband? Don't let him come here. He must not see me," said Irma.

"Stay there!" cried Walpurga. "Send mother here and tell her to bring some of the wine along that I brought home with me. It's in the blue chest, with the child's things. Be quick about it!"

In a few hurried words, Irma told her that her father was dead, and that she had sought to drown herself in the lake. She put her hand to her brow, and drew it back in alarm.

"Woe's me! How is this?"

"You've been bleeding. You must have fallen and struck your head against a stone. Just look!" said she, forcing herself to assume a cheerful tone; "this is the green kerchief you sent my child." Irma tore off the bandage and silently looked at the blood-stained handkerchief.

"That quenches the fire; let it run," said she to herself. Then, with a sudden access of emotion, she said:

"Oh Walpurga! I can't die! I can't kill myself—and yet I can't live. I've—I've been wicked—"

She hid her face against Walpurga's heart, which beat loud and violently.

"Help me! tell me what to do! Tell me quickly, before your mother comes!"

"I do n't know—I do n't know at all—but mother will know. She knows how to help every one. See there, it's stopped bleeding, already. Only keep calm."

The mother joined them. Irma looked at her, as if she were an angel come to save her. With a voice free from the slightest trace of doubt or hesitation, the mother said:

"Walpurga, this is your Countess!"

"Yes, mother."

"Then you're a thousand times welcome," said the old woman. "I offer you both my hands. Sad things must have happened to you. You must have fallen. Or has some one struck you in the forehead?"

Irma made no reply. She sat between the two women who supported her, and her gaze was as fixed as though she were lifeless.

"Mother, help her; say something to her," whispered Walpurga.

"No; let her quietly recover herself. Every wound must bleed itself out."

Irma grasped her hands, kissed them and cried:

"Mother! you've saved me. Mother! I'll remain with you; take me with you!"

"Yes, that I will. You'll find it ever so healthy up in my home. The air and the trees there are better than anywhere else in this world. There you'll become well again, and all this will fall away from you. Does your father know that you've run away, out into the wide world? and does he know why?"

"He did know. He's dead. Walpurga, tell her how it is with me."

"There's time enough for that; for, God willing, we'll be together a long while. You can tell me all when you're calm and composed. But now, drink something."

After considerable effort, the two women succeeded in drawing the silver-foiled cork. Walpurga finished the operation by taking the cork between her teeth and pulling it out. Irma drank some of the wine.

"Drink," said Walpurga. "It must be wholesome, for Doctor Gunther sent it to mother. But she won't drink it. She says she'll wait till she grows old and needs the strength that wine gives."

A melancholy smile passed over Irma's face at the thought that the aged woman before her meant to wait until she grew old.

Irma was obliged to take a few more mouthfuls of the wine. When she complained of the pain in her foot, the mother skilfully extracted a thorn. Irma felt as if a gentle angel were attending her, and offered to kiss the old woman's hands once more. "My hands were never kissed before you kissed 'em," said the old woman, deprecatingly; "but I know how you mean it. I never touched a countess before in all my life; but they're human beings, just like the rest of us."

Irma heaved a deep sigh. She told her rescuers that she would go with them, but only on condition that no one except themselves was to know who she was. She wished to live concealed and unknown, and, if she were discovered, she would take her life.

"Do n't do that again," said the old woman, with a stern voice. "Do n't say that again. It won't do to trifle with such things. That's no threat. But here you have my hand and my word of honor that not a word shall pass my lips."

"Nor mine either!" exclaimed Walpurga, laying her hand, with that of her mother, in Irma's.

"Tell me one thing," asked the mother. "Why did n't you go to a convent? One can do that nowadays."

"I mean to expiate in freedom," said she.

"I understand you. You're right."

Not another word was spoken. The mother held her hand upon Irma's forehead, on which she now bound a white handkerchief.

"It'll be well in a week, and there won't be a scar left," she said, consolingly.

"The white cloth shall remain there as long as I live," replied Irma. She now asked them to provide her with other clothes, before she showed herself in Hansei's presence.

Walpurga hurried back to the inn near the landing-place. Here she found Hansei in an angry mood, and scolding terribly. Every interruption annoyed him. He had enough to look after, as it was. There was more work put upon him than upon the horses in the wagon. He was in that excited state, often produced by travel and change of abode, in which one's better self seems to disappear, and when a restless and homeless feeling renders its possessor excessively irritable. Besides that, the foal, beautiful as it was, had put him to considerable trouble. It had run away and had almost got under the wheels of one of the wagons.

Hansei was very angry. Walpurga found it difficult to pacify him, and at last she burst into tears and said:

"Sooner than move to our new home in anger and hatred, I'd rather we'd all gone to the bottom in the boat."

"Yes, yes; I'm quiet; just try to be so, too," said Hansei, recovering himself and looking towards the lake as if Black Esther's head were again rising on the waves. He continued: "But we must hurry on, or else it'll be pitch dark before we get there. We've a good distance before us, and the horses have a heavy load. What are you about there? Whom have you got over there among the willows?"

"You'll know all about it in a little while. Just take my word for it, that mother and I are doing something that'll be a satisfaction to us as long as we live. I am glad that God has given me a chance to do something at this moment, when I would have liked to ask Him what I could do to prove my gratitude. She's a dear, kind creature, and you'll be satisfied."

Walpurga spoke so earnestly and impressively, that Hansei replied:

"I'll drive on with the household goods, and, if it suits you, you can follow in the covered wagon. Come as soon as you can. Uncle's here, and he'll drive."

Walpurga nodded to Hansei, who started up the mountain with the loaded wagon. Then she went to a chest and took out a full suit. She carried the clothes into the thicket where she found Irma sitting beside the mother, Irma's head resting against the breast of the old woman, who had wound her arms around her.

"Irmgard will be quite happy with us; we know each other, already," said the mother.

No one on earth knows what Irma confessed to old Beate, down among the willows by the lake. The old woman breathed thrice on her brow, as if her warm breath could dispel the charm.

"And now put on your clothes," said Beate. In the thicket, Irma exchanged her dress for the peasant's garb.

When she left the thicket and returned to the path, she kept her eyes fixed on the ground. She was now entering upon a new world—a new life.

She looked at the beings and the objects in the parlor of the inn, as if it were all a dream. She had come back to the world again from the depths of the lake. Here, life was going on as usual; there was eating and drinking, laughing and talking, singing, driving, riding—All this she had already left far behind her. She was as one risen from the dead. Silent, and with folded hands, she sat upon the bench, caring nothing for the world about her, longing for only perfect solitude. And yet her ear was so acute that she overheard the hostess whisper to Walpurga: "A kinswoman, I suppose," and, significantly putting her finger to her forehead, "she do n't seem to be in her right wits."

"May be you 're right," replied Walpurga. A smile, as of pain, passed over Irma's beautiful lips: "There's one protecting disguise—and it is madness."

She felt as if a net of thorns had descended upon her head. Insanity may, indeed, sometimes serve as an invisible cap, concealing, or rather disguising, the sorrow-stricken wearer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE grandmother was out of doors, arranging a bed in the covered wagon. She told her brother to drive carefully, and not crack his whip so often; for Uncle Peter, known as the little pitchman, was so elated at the idea of having a whip and two horses under his charge, that he cracked his whip incessantly.

"The stranger's putting on airs, I think. Who is she, anyhow?" asked the little pitchman, taking the thong between his teeth, as if he could only thus prevent himself from cracking the whip.

"A poor, sick creature," said Beate. It went hard with her to say this, and yet it was not a lie.

Hansei had gone on with the large team. And now the women, too, agreed that it was time to start. Irma now saw Walpurga's child for the first time, and, as soon as it caught Irma's eye, it shouted and wanted to go to her.

"Oh! that's lovely," exclaimed Walpurga and her mother at the same time. "She's always so shy."

Irma took the child in her arms and hugged and kissed it. She felt as if again embracing the childlike purity which, in herself, had withered and died. Her expression changed from one of joy to one of sadness, and the grandmother said:

"You've a good, honest heart; children feel and know that. But now you'd better give the child to Walpurga and get into the wagon."

A bed had been prepared for Irma. The grandmother got up into the wagon and, taking the child in her arms, sat down beside Irma. Walpurga and Gundel sat in front, looking about them. The uncle walked beside the horses, and would, now and then, cast a sorrowful look at the whip that he was not allowed to crack. No one spoke a word; but the child laughed and prattled and wanted Irma to play with her.

"Go to sleep now," said the grandmother, and in a soft voice she sang both child and Irma to sleep.

"Who's that coming down the hill?" suddenly asked Walpurga of the uncle.

"The one's a forester, and the other must be a nobleman's servant."

Walpurga was alarmed. When the horsemen drew near, she recognized Baum. Swift as thought she slipped into the wagon and left Gundel sitting alone in front.

The horsemen drew nearer, and at last halted by the wagon. The child awoke and cried, and thus awakened Irma. A thin curtain was all that separated her from him. The horse that Baum rode distended its nostrils, threw its head back, and reared so that it was difficult to hold it in check. Irma recognized it. It was Pluto, her own horse; and so it had been captured and brought back again. If the horse could have spoken, it would have said: "Here is my mistress; here is the one whom you seek."

Irma could hear Baum asking the uncle:

"Did you meet a young lady in a blue riding-habit?"

"No."

"Did you hear any one mention such a person?"

"Not a word."

"Whom have you in the wagon there?"

Irma trembled. Walpurga grasped her hand. It was as cold as ice. The child cried again.

"You can hear it; there's a little child in there," said the forester to Baum. "Let's go on."

The horsemen rode off, and Irma, looking after them, could see her feathered hat hanging from the pommel of the saddle.

The wagon slowly ascended the hill, while the horsemen hurried off in the opposite direction.

Irma kissed the child and said:

"O you darling! you've saved me, for the second time. Let me get out, too. I want to walk."

The mother dissuaded her and begged her to remain with her. Irma yielded; she had hardly lain down before she fell asleep again, and no longer knew that she was crossing the mountains in a farmer's wagon.

It was already past noon when they overtook Hansei, far up the mountain, where he had stopped to rest his horses.

"Let's keep together," said he. His anger had vanished and he now was twice as kindly as before. "I think we ought n't to enter our new home in such a straggling way. I've given the servants strict orders to drive slowly. We can easily catch up with 'em, for our wagons are light, and then we'll all be together. I want mother and wife and child to be with me when we enter on the farm."

"That's right! I'm glad you've come to your senses again. Oh! I know you. When you're excited, the only thing to do is to leave you alone for a little while, and you soon get homesick after your folks and the good Hansei that's in you; and then you're all right again. But come here. I want to tell you something. To-day, you'll have to prove whether you're a real, strong man; and if you do, I'll never, in all my life, deny that men are stronger than we."

"Well! what is it?"

She lead him into the inn garden and said:

"You've often heard tell of the household fairies they used to have in olden times? They were good, peaceful spirits that brought blessings and wealth and good fortune to whatever house they visited. But there was one condition. As long as they stayed, no one dared ask their name, or where they'd come from."

"Yes, yes! I've heard that often enough; but I don't believe a word of it."

"You need n't believe it; I do n't ask you to. I want to put you to the test. Listen! Mother and I have ever so tender and delicate a creature in the wagon, there. She's strong and powerful, but quite strange in her ways. She means to stay with us, but she won't be a burden. And now, Hansei, tell me; have you strength enough never to ask her who and whence she is, or any other question? You must take my word for it. I know her and know what I'm doing in keeping her with us; and on the strength of that, will you be good and faithful and kind to her? Tell me; can you, will you be this?"

"Is that the way I'm to prove whether I'm a strong man, or not?"

"Yes, that's it; nothing more."

"I can do that; and here's my hand on it."

"Let me have it."

"You'll see. I'll keep my promise; that's easy enough."

"It is n't as easy as you think for, Hansei."

"For the sake of getting you, for the rest of your life, to admit that a man has more strength of mind than a woman, and can easier undertake a thing, and carry it out, too, I'll show you what I can do. Your good friend shall be mine, too. But she is n't crazy, nor does n't bite, does she?"

"No, you need n't worry about that."

"All right then ; that settles it."

Hansei went out to the wagon with Walpurga, who drew the curtain aside and said :

"My husband wants to bid you welcome."

"Welcome !" said Irma, offering her hand to Hansei.

He stared at her in mute astonishment, and it was not until Walpurga raised his hand that he offered it to Irma.

They had taken up their journey once more, and Hansei, who, with his wife, was walking up hill in advance of the wagons, said :

"Wife ! if it was n't daylight, and you and mother and the child were n't here,—if I was n't quite sure that I 'm in my right senses, and that it 's all true—I 'd really believe that you had a fairy in the wagon there. Is she lame? can't she walk?"

"She can walk very well."

Walpurga turned back towards the wagon and said :

"Irmgard, do n't you want to get out for a little while and walk up the hill with us? It 's so beautiful here."

"Yes, gladly," was the answer.

Irma alighted and walked with them for awhile. Hansei regarded her with timid side-glances. The stranger limped. Perhaps it 's true after all ; the Lady of the Lake has a swan's foot and can't walk well. He cast sly looks at her feet, but they were just like those of other people. Gradually, he ventured to raise his eyes. He saw that the clothes she had on were his wife's, and that she was wondrously beautiful. His head grew so warm that he lifted his hat now and then. What 's real in the world and what is n't? he would ask himself. Had his wife a double? and could she appear in another form?

Walpurga lingered behind and left the two walking by themselves. Irma asked herself what she had better say to Hansei, and how she should address him. It was the first time in her life that she found herself in an humble position. "How should I address one of an inferior class?" thought she. At last, she said :

"You 're a happy man ; you have a wife and child and mother-in-law as good as one can wish for in this world."

"Yes, yes, they 'll do very well," said Hansei.

Although she had not intended it, Irma's praise was, to a certain extent, patronizing, and Hansei had observed this. He would have confirmed her opinion by his answer, and would have liked to ask : "Have you known her long?" but he remembered that he had promised to ask no questions. Walpurga was right ; it was a hard task. He rolled his tongue about in his mouth and felt as if the one-half of it were tied.

"The country 's pretty rough hereabouts ; further up, when you reach our new home it 's much better," said he, at last. It was long before he could say that. He had intended to ask whether

the stranger had ever been in that neighborhood before; but he had promised to ask no questions and to transpose one's questions is not so easy a task.

Irma felt that she must say something that would put the man at his ease, and she began: "Hansei!"—his face brightened when he heard her calling him by name—"Hansei, try to think that you've known me for ever so long; do n't look at me as a stranger. I do n't like to ask anything of others; but I do ask this of you. I know you'll do it; for you've a good, kind face. And it could n't be otherwise; Walpurga's husband, with whom she is so happy, must be a good man. I beg of you, therefore, do n't be concerned; I'll not be a burden to you."

"Oh, there's no idea of such a thing. We've enough, thank God. One cow more in the stable, or one person more in the house, won't make any difference; so you need n't worry about that.—And we've also taken charge of an old pensioner on the estate and—I do n't want to know what you do n't want to tell, and if any one in this world offers to harm you, call me, and I'll defend you with my life. But it seems you have n't been much among the mountains; so let me give you a piece of advice. In climbing mountains, the rule is: Go right on, and never stop."

They waited for the wagon. Hansei drew a long breath after his long speech. He felt satisfied with himself, and looked about him with a self-complacent air.

Irma sat down by the wayside. She was now on the heights which, on the evening before, she had seen all aglow with the rosy sunset, and then fading away in the pale mists. The giant peaks that she had beheld from afar were now near, and seemed still vaster than before. Here and there in the woods, there was a clearing of meadow and field, and, now and then, a house was visible. Looking down, she caught glimpses of the foaming, sparkling forest stream, so far below them that they could scarcely hear its roar.

Hansei walked at Irma's side, but without uttering a word.

The wagon overtook them. Irma got in again, Hansei assisting her quite politely. He was about to lift his hat to her, when, with cheerful word and glance, she thanked him.

"She's a very decent person," said Hansei to his wife, "and we've a nice little room for her, too, if she is n't afraid of the old pensioner."

Walpurga felt happy that the great point was gained.

As Hansei had talked with the stranger, the little pitchman thought himself entitled to say something, too; and, as the first sign of his resolve, he cracked his whip so loudly that the sound was echoed back from the valley and the mountains.

"Did n't I tell you to be quiet?" said the old woman.

"She—she's well again," replied the little pitchman. "Is n't it so?" said he, addressing Irma. "The noise do n't hurt you?"

Irma told him not to put himself out on her account, and, emboldened by her answer, he enquired :

"What 's your name?"

"Irmgard."

"Indeed! why, that was my wife's name, and, if you've no objection, I'll marry an Irmgard again. I've got half of a house and a whole goat. I owe something on the house, but the goat 's paid for. Say! will you have me?"

"Do n't make such jokes, Peter," cried Beate, nothing loth, however, to hear pleasantry from some quarter.

The little pitchman laughed heartily, and was well pleased with himself. Yes, Hansei was now the freehold farmer, but still he could n't talk to people the way he could. The little pitchman was quite entertaining. When he had nothing more to say, he would gather strawberries, which grew by the wayside and, in this high region, did not ripen until late. He laid them on a hazel leaf and offered them to Irma. Yes, Peter has good manners; he could tell that by his sister's face, for she smiled her approval.

The journey to their new home proceeded without further adventure. When they came in sight of her native village, and before they had reached the boundary line, the grandmother requested them to stop. She alighted, went into the woods, knelt down until her face touched the ground, and exclaimed :

"God be praised, I'm with thee again! Keep me well, let me and mine pass many peaceful, happy days on thee, and, when my last hour comes, receive me kindly."

She went back to the wagon, and said : "God be with you all! now we're at home. Do you see that house up there, with the big lindlen tree? That 's the freehold farm, where we're to live."

Gundel and the child alighted, Irma alone remaining in the wagon. All the others walked the rest of the way.

They passed through the valley and reached the village, where they were still an hour's walk from the farm. As they entered the village, the little pitchman cracked his whip loudly. He wanted every one to see his kindred, and the amount of property he was now moving with. They passed by a little cottage.

"I was born there," said the grandmother to Hansei.

"I'll take off my hat to that house," replied Hansei, suiting his action to the word.

The wagons which had preceded them were stopping at the inn which was near the town-hall and the church. The people had gathered there to get a look at the new freeholder and his family. The little pitchman acted as master of ceremonies, and pointed out the burgomaster's wife to Walpurga. Walpurga went up to her, and Beate felt truly happy, for the mother of the burgomaster's wife, she in whose house Beate, while yet in her school-days, had served as nursemaid, was also there. She enquired for the boy

whom she had then taken care of. "He's dead," they said, "but there's his son." A stalwart lad was called, but when Beate told him that she had taken care of his father while he was yet a little child, he had not a word to say.

Half the village had gathered about the new arrivals, and they remained there chatting for a long while.

Irma lay there in the wagon in the open market-place, forgotten by those whom she had joined. The grandmother was the first to think of her; she hurried out and said:

"Forgive us for forgetting you so, but we'll soon be home."

Irma replied that they need not trouble themselves about her. The grandmother did not quite understand the tone in which she spoke.

Here on the public road, while she lay in the covered farm wagon and could hear the loud talking of the crowd, she felt a pang of grief to think that she was an object of charity, and that she to whom the world had once done homage, was now forgotten. But she quickly regained her self-command. It is better thus, for thus you are alone.

At last they drove on. The road again lay up the mountain. The grandmother was quite happy and greeted every one. The plum trees were laden with fruit, and the apple trees along the road—she had, while yet a girl, seen them planted—had grown so large that they bent under the weight of the ruddy fruit. The grandmother often said: "I never thought it was so far; no, I meant to say, I thought it was further than this. Dear me, how I'm talking. It seems as if the world had shrunk together. Children, I tell you what, you'll live to see great, and good, and beautiful things come to pass. Come, give me the child," said she to Gundel, and she took Burgei in her arms, her face radiant with joy.

"Burgei, I've sung here, and so will you; and here I carried your mother on my arms, just as I'm carrying you, now. There! give that to the bird."

She had taken a piece of bread from her pocket and gave the child some crumbs to scatter to the birds on the way, while she, too, kept throwing crumbs to the right and the left.

She did not speak another word, but her lips moved silently.

CHAPTER XV.

AS they drew near the house, they could hear the neighing of the white foal.

"That's a good beginning," cried Hansei.

The grandmother placed the child on the ground, and got her hymnbook out of the chest. Pressing the book against her breast with both hands, she went into the house, being the first to enter. Hansei, who was standing near the stable, took a piece of chalk

from his pocket and wrote the letters C. M. B., and the date on the stable-door. Then he, too, went into the house, his wife, Irma and the child following him.

Before going into the sitting-room, the grandmother knocked thrice at the door. When she had entered, she placed the open hymnbook upon the open window-sill, so that the sun might read in it. There were no tables or chairs in the room.

Hansei shook hands with his wife and said, "God be with you, freeholder's wife."

From that moment, Walpurga was known as the "freeholder's wife" and was never called by any other name.

And now they showed Irma her room. The view extended over meadow and brook and the neighboring forests. She examined the room. There was naught but a green Dutch oven and bare walls, and she had brought nothing with her. In her paternal mansion, and at the castle, there were chairs and tables, horses and carriages; but here—

None of these follow the dead.

Irma knelt by the window and gazed out over meadow and forest, where the sun was now sinking.

How was it yesterday—was it only yesterday?—when you saw the sun go down?

Her thoughts were confused and indistinct. She pressed her hand to her forehead; the white handkerchief was still there. A bird looked up to her from the meadow, and, when her glance rested upon it, it flew away into the woods.

"The bird has its nest," said she to herself, "and I—"

Suddenly, she drew herself up. Hansei had walked out to the grass plot in front of Irma's window, removed the slip of the cherry tree from his hat, and planted it in the ground.

The grandmother stood by and said: "I trust that you'll be alive and hearty, long enough to climb this tree and gather cherries from it, and that your children and grandchildren may do the same."

There was much to do and to set to rights in the house, and, on such occasions, it usually happens that those who are dearest to one another are as much in each other's way as closets and tables which have not yet been placed where they belong. The best proof of the amiability of these folks was that they assisted each other cheerfully, and, indeed, with jest and song.

Walpurga moved her best furniture into Irma's room. Hansei did not interpose a word. "Are n't you too lonely here?" asked Walpurga, after she had arranged everything as well as possible in so short a time.

"Not at all. There is no place in all the world lonely enough for me. You've so much to do now; do n't worry about me. I must now arrange things within myself. I see how good you and yours are; fate has directed me kindly."

"Oh do n't talk that way. If you had n't given me the money, how could we have bought the farm? This is really your own."

"Do n't speak of that," said Irma, with a sudden start, "never mention that money to me again."

Walpurga promised, and merely added that Irma need n't be alarmed at the old man who lived in the room above hers, and who, at times, would talk to himself and make a loud noise. He was old and blind. The children teased and worried him, but he was n't bad and would harm no one. Walpurga offered, at all events, to leave Gundel with Irma for the first night; but Irma preferred to be alone.

"You 'll stay with us; won't you?" said Walpurga, hesitatingly. "You won't have such bad thoughts again?"

"No, never. But do n't talk now, my voice pains me and so does yours, too. Good night! leave me alone."

Irma sat by the window and gazed out into the dark night.

Was it only a day since she had passed through such terrors? Suddenly, she sprang from her seat with a shudder. She had seen Black Esther's head rising out of the darkness, had again heard her dying shriek, had beheld the distorted face and the wild, black tresses.—Her hair stood on end. Her thoughts carried her to the bottom of the lake, where she now lay dead. She opened the window and inhaled the soft, balmy air. She sat by the open casement for a long while, and suddenly heard some one laughing in the room above her.

"Ha! ha! I won't do you the favor! I won't die! I won't die. Pooh, pooh! I'll live till I'm a hundred years old and then I'll get a new lease of life."

It was the old pensioner. After a while, he continued:

"I'm not so stupid; I know that it's night now and the freeholder and his wife are come. I'll give them lots of trouble. I'm Jochem. Jochem's my name, and what the people do n't like, I do for spite. Ha! ha! ha! I do n't use any light and they must make me an allowance for that. I'll insist on it, if I have to go to the king himself, about it."

Irma started, when she heard the king mentioned.

"Yes, I'll go to the king, to the king! to the king!" cried the old man overhead, as if he knew that the word tortured Irma.

She heard him close the window and move a chair. The old man went to bed.

Irma looked out into the dark night. Not a star was to be seen. There was no light anywhere; nothing was heard but the roaring of the mountain stream and the rustling of the trees. The night seemed like a dark abyss.

"Are you still awake?" asked a soft voice, without. It was the grandmother.

"I was once a servant at this farm," said she. "That was forty

years ago ; and now I'm the mother of the freeholder's wife, and almost the head one on the farm. But I keep thinking of you all the time. I keep trying to think how it is in your heart. I've something to tell you. Come out again. I'll take you where it'll do you good to be. Come !"

Irma went out into the dark night with the old woman. How different this guide from the one she had had the day before !

The old woman led her to the fountain. She had brought a cup with her and gave it to Irma. "Come, drink ; good cold water's the best. Water comforts the body ; it cools and quiets us ; it's like bathing one's soul. I know what sorrow is, too. One's insides burn as if they were afire."

Irma drank some of the water of the mountain spring. It seemed like a healing dew, whose influence was diffused through her whole frame.

The grandmother led her back to her room and said : "You've still got the shirt on that you wore at the palace. You'll never stop thinking of that place till you've burned that shirt."

The old woman would listen to no denial and Irma was as docile as a little child. The grandmother hurried to get a coarse shirt for her and, after Irma had put it on, brought wood and a light, and burnt the other at the open fire. Irma was also obliged to cut off her long nails and throw them into the fire. Then Beate disappeared for a few moments, and returned with Irma's riding-habit. "You must have been shot ; for there are balls in this," said she, spreading out the long, blue habit.

A smile passed over Irma's face, as she felt the balls that had been sewed into the lower part of the habit, so that it might hang more gracefully. Beate had also brought something very useful—a deerskin.

"Hansei sends you this," said she. "He thinks that may be you're used to having something soft for your feet to rest on. He shot the deer himself."

Irma appreciated the kindness of the man who could show such affection to one who was both a stranger and a mystery to him.

The grandmother remained at Irma's bedside until she fell asleep. Then she breathed thrice on the sleeper and left the room.

It was late at night when Irma awoke.

"To the king ! to the king ! to the king !" The words had been uttered thrice in a loud voice. Was it hers, or that of the man overhead ? Irma pressed her hand to her forehead and felt the bandage. Was it sea grass that had gathered there ? Was she lying alive at the bottom of the lake ? Gradually all that had happened became clear to her.

Alone, in the dark and silent night, she wept. And these were

the first tears she had shed since the terrible events through which she had passed.

It was evening when Irma awoke. She put her hand to her forehead. A wet cloth had been bound round it. She had been sleeping nearly twenty-four hours. The grandmother was sitting by her bed.

"You've a strong constitution," said the old woman, "and that helped you. It's all right now."

Irma arose. She felt strong and, guided by the grandmother, walked over to the dwelling-house.

"God be praised, that you're well again," said Walpurga, who was standing there with her husband; and Hansei added: "Yes, that's right."

Irma thanked them and looked up at the gable of the house. What words there met her eye?

"Do n't you think the house has a good motto written on its forehead?" asked Hansei.

Irma started. On the gable of the house, she read the following inscription:

EAT AND DRINK: FORGET NOT GOD: THINE HONOR GUARD:
OF ALL THY STORE,
THOU 'LT CARRY HENCE
A WINDING-SHEET,
AND NOTHING MORE.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH Irma's sudden flight, Baum's occupation was gone. He returned to where she was to have waited for him, and found that she had disappeared. He gazed into the distance, but saw nothing. A dog following its master's track was better off than he, for while instinct would help it, man could only guess.

Had she flown? and if so, whither? Why had she done so? and what, under such circumstances, was the duty of a subordinate? Ought he to pursue her who had sent him back? She had honestly and frankly sent the dog home; but the servant was only human and must therefore be imposed upon.

"For shame, Countess! Thus to fool a poor servant who dare not disobey!" said Baum, speaking to himself. He felt that now, for the first time, he was put to the great test, and that this was the time to prove himself a reasoning servant. Perhaps the letters he had brought contained an appointment for this evening. They are at the hunt and, as if by chance, meet in the woods; for it would not do to visit Wildenort openly, as it was but a short time since they had gone into mourning there. And so they mean to keep even the servant in ignorance of their plans. But why should they? He could have been depended upon.

But perhaps the Countess had escaped after all.

But why? and whither?

They had shown so much confidence in him. The head chamberlain had told him, before leaving: "You're always to remain near the Countess, always—do you understand? And you are to conduct her back to court." Could they have dreamt that she meant to escape? and if so, why should they only half trust him?

"I am innocent!" exclaimed Baum; but what avails innocence? It was more important to be clever and sensible.

Baum's master, Baroness Steigeneck's chief chamberlain, had imparted some valuable precepts to him. "There are two things," said he, "that a good servant should always have with him—a sharp knife and a good watch. When anything happens that disconcerts you, take out your watch, count off ten seconds, and then make up your mind what is best to be done."

One disadvantage possessed by this precept, in common with

many other good ones, is the great danger of your forgetting it when excited.

Baum rode back to the castle. Perhaps the Countess had returned by some other road; perhaps her maid could tell him where she had intended to ride to. He asked the maid: "Is your mistress here?"

"No; she rode out with you."

"Do n't you know where she intended going?"

"Has she left you? Oh, God! now she'll do it, for sure."

"What do you mean?"

"I've already told the Count, that I believed she'd take her life. I believe she has either poison or a dagger with her; she'll kill herself."

"If she meant to take her life that way, she might have done so in her room," replied Baum.

"Yes, yes! It was only last night that she cried out in her sleep, 'Deep in the lake!' Oh gracious heavens! my dear, lovely Countess is dead! Oh, what an unhappy creature I am! what will become of me!"

Baum endeavored to pacify her, and enquired whether the Countess had left any papers anywhere.

The writing desk was open and papers were strewn about on it. They found a letter directed to the queen. Baum wanted to take it, but the maid would not give it up. She would not suffer a stranger to pry into her mistress's secrets.

In the midst of the dispute, Baum suddenly took out his watch. The chamberlain's advice had occurred to him. He looked fixedly at the dial, and when he had finished counting ten, he nodded with a self-satisfied air, for he had regained his presence of mind.

Very well, the maid might deliver the letter herself; that would neither help nor hinder matters. But he would now show himself worthy of the greatest confidence. His task was to institute enquiries; perhaps he might yet save the Countess.

While the maid, who was hastily putting the letter into her pocket, had turned her back upon him, he saw another letter addressed "To my friend." He quickly perceived that this was of far greater value than the other, and put it into his own pocket. He well knew that there was only one person for whom it could be intended, and he knew who that person was. The maid had heard the rustling of the paper, and now asked him to give it to her. Baum ran out of the room and summoned the servants. The maid followed him, and he now quickly changed the attitude of defense for one of attack, and demanded the letter to the queen, in order that he might open it and thus obtain some clue as to the Countess's whereabouts. He said that he would hold the maid responsible for the consequences. She ran away and he made no

further attempt to carry out his plan, for he did not know whether he had a right to open the letter. At any rate, he had undisputed possession of the more important epistle to the king. He ordered the groom to saddle another horse and accompany him.

The rosy sunset was already gilding the windows of the castle when the two horsemen rode forth. But whither?

They questioned a laborer working on the road, but he had seen nothing of the Countess. They saw a shepherd driving his flock homeward, and, riding up to him, they enquired whether he had seen her. He nodded affirmatively, but the loud bleating of the sheep prevented them from hearing what he said. Baum alighted and learned from him that the Countess had been seen riding full tilt along the road that led to the Chamois hill.

"She sits her horse firmly, and rides very well," said the shepherd, praising her.

This was a clue, at all events. They rode off, at full gallop, in the direction indicated. When they reached the drained marsh, they heard the neighing of a horse. They rode up to it, and found that it was Irma's saddle-horse, quietly grazing, but bridle and girth were covered with thick foam. "The Countess has been thrown. Who knows where she may be lying, weak and faint?" said Baum. He meant to be discreet, and was in no hurry to tell all to the groom.

They searched for her everywhere, and called out her name again and again. They found nothing, nor did they receive any answer. Baum discovered the horse's tracks, but was somewhat confused by them, as it had taken the same path going and returning. They took the horse with them, but did not mount, for it was necessary to find out where the track led to. Baum's keen eye enabled him to distinguish the hoofprints in the twilight.

"If we only had the dog with us; he knows her. Why did n't you bring the dog with you?" he asked angrily.

"You did n't say anything about it."

"Ride back and bring him. No, stay; I can't be here alone."

They reached the Chamois hill. "Let's turn aside, into the wood," cried Baum.

He now found use for his good knife. He gathered some of the brushwood, bound it together into a torch, kindled it, and its light enabled him to find the track. It was here that the horse had turned. There were also prints of a woman's foot going in the opposite direction. He followed them for a few paces and then lost the track.

"She must be here," said Baum. "It was from here that she went down into the wood; I know every spot about here. Keep to the left with the two horses, but always near enough to hear my voice. I'll keep to the right with one."

They searched and shouted, but found nothing. At last they

met again. A stag rushed by. Could it have spoken, it might have told them where Irma had startled it from its resting place—a full hour's walk from where they then were.

"If you find her, you'll be handsomely rewarded," said Baum to the groom. He addressed him in the way he thought his royal master would have done.

They spent the greater part of the night wandering in the forest. At last, they were obliged to lie down and wait for the daylight, for there was no longer a path by which to lead the horses.

The day was far advanced when Baum and the groom awoke. They could see the sparkling lake from afar, and could hear the sounds of distant music, while the rock near which they stood echoed the reports of cannon.

Baum took the pistols from the saddle-pouch and fired them off in rapid succession. Then he listened with bated breath, thinking that if Irma were anywhere in the neighborhood, she would hear the shots and give some sign of her whereabouts; but not a sound was heard.

They now found a forest-path leading down towards the lake. They reached the water's edge. At their feet lay the lake, smooth as a mirror and stretching away for miles. Who knew what lay concealed within its depths? In the distance, there was a boat with people and beasts aboard, and now the boat reached the shore. Baum's companion turned to the other side, where there were a few scattered farm-houses and fishermen's huts. Man and beast were worn out and needed rest. Baum asked every one he met whether they had seen a lady in a blue riding-habit and wearing a hat with a feather; but he could find no trace of her anywhere.

"Stop!" at last said a little old man who was cutting willows by the lake: "I've seen her."

"Where? When?"

"Over there in the tavern. It's almost a year ago; she lived there a good many weeks."

Baum cursed the peasant folk for a stupid set.

Fortunately, he met a gend'arme and told him who he was and whom he was looking for. He then sent the groom back to Wildenort with the lady's saddle. Placing his own saddle on Pluto, he rode along the edge of the lake with the gend'arme. On a rock near the shore, they soon saw a figure holding out a hat with a feather on it. They made for the spot, at full speed. Baum recognized his brother Thomas, and was so startled that he lost his stirrup.

If it were he who had robbed and murdered the Countess!

The gend'arme knew the wild fellow. Thomas stared and grinned at them both. His hair was wet and his clothes were dripping.

"What are you doing there?" cried the gend'arme. "Whose hat is that?"

"That 's none of your business," replied Thomas, his teeth chattering with the cold.

Baum offered the shivering man his brandy flask, and Thomas took a long draught. Then, with mingled rage and sorrow, he told them that the king's sweetheart had lost her way the night before and had come to their hut, and that she had led away his sister to plunge into the lake with her. He had come too late; he had seen something floating on the water and had jumped in to save her, but the hat was all he had found.

The gend'arme was not inclined to believe Thomas's story and would have arrested him forthwith, if Baum had not whispered to him that there was no doubt that the lady had drowned herself, and that there was no murder in the case. He was moved by a feeling akin to pity for his brother, and did not wish to have him arrested.

"Come here!" said Baum to Thomas. "Let 's make an exchange. I 'll give you my flask—there 's a good deal in it yet—for the hat."

"Oh no! I know who the hat belongs to: it 's worth a lot, and I 'll take it to the king."

He still has got his sweetheart's hat,
Though she lies in the lake;
And since she's drowned, another love
Right gladly will he take.

Sang Thomas, with heavy voice, while he threw the hat up into the air and caught it again.

The gend'arme wanted to give Thomas a beating; Baum restrained him, however, and then walked up to Thomas and placed his hand upon his shoulder. Thomas started, but suddenly grew quiet and looked at Baum as if afraid of him. Baum spoke to him with a condescending air, and Thomas listened, with mouth agape, as if trying to recollect something, he knew not what. The voice, and the hand upon his shoulder, made quite another man of him, and the savage, murderous fellow wept.

"Will you give me the hat for a gold piece, or must it be taken from you by force? You see we 're two to one, and can master you," said Baum.

Without saying a word, Thomas handed him the hat, and when Baum gave him the gold piece, Thomas could not close his hand on it. As if quite bewildered, he looked now at the gold piece, now at the giver.

Baum spoke to him earnestly, and told him that he ought to give some of the money to his mother, if he still had one.

"A mother?" stammered Thomas, looking at Baum with a

glassy eye. "A mother!" he repeated, as if reminded of something long forgotten.

The gend'arme was touched by the lackey's generosity. "He must be a very fine man," thought he.

Thomas again told them that Irma had been at their hut the night before, and that his mother knew more about her than he did, for she had been alone with her. Baum and the gend'arme said they would like to talk with his mother, and Thomas guided them to the hut.

On the way there, the gend'arme informed Baum of Thomas's family history. "You see, the fellow's a brawler and has often been convicted of poaching. I've often advised him to emigrate to America, for there he can hunt as much as he pleases. He has a brother in America—a twin brother, but he must be a good-for-nothing fellow; that is, if he is n't dead. He's never yet written a line to his mother or his brother, and has never sent home as much as you could put in your eye. But that's the way they all become, after they get to America. A good many have gone there from my place, but they're all selfish, good-for-nothing fellows."

Baum smiled. He had need of all his self-command. He scarcely spoke a word, for he was nerving himself for the meeting with his mother, and felt annoyed that she, too, was mixed up in this affair. He had enough to think of without that.

The gend'arme knew many stories about poachers and other outlaws and, in order to beguile the time and entertain Baum, recounted some of them. Such stories, however, have one unpleasant feature. It is rather uncomfortable to listen to them, unless one's hands are free from guilt. Baum nodded to him graciously, for it would not do, by look or manner, to betray that he was in the least related to the abandoned wretch who was walking ahead of them. The gend'arme said that he had once been bitten in the finger by a murderer whom he had helped to arrest, and he showed Baum the scar.

Baum, at last, endeavored to put an end to these terrible stories. He asked the gend'arme what regiment he had served in, and put the question as graciously as if he were about to draw a medal from his pocket and bestow it on the man. Now nothing can be pleasanter than to recount one's military experiences. The forester told of his many exploits, laughing heartily at his own stories, and Baum, seeing no help for it, joined in the laughter. Thomas, who was walking on before, turned around and grinned, and then went on. They reached the hut. It was empty. Old Zenza had disappeared.

"She's looking for Esther, I'm sure," said Thomas.

"What's the matter with Black Esther?" asked the gend'arme.

"Black Esther!" repeated Thomas; "Ha! ha! the lake'll wash her white now. If any one would pay me well for it, I'd jump in, too."

He threw himself on the sack of leaves, and silently looked at the hands with which he had beaten Esther last night. Then he threw his head back and fell into a heavy sleep, and they could not get a word out of him. Baum and the gend'arme rode away, intending to return to the lake, in order to pursue their enquiries, and to leave directions everywhere that the search should be kept up. Emerging from the forest, they gained the highway, and here it was that they had met the covered wagon.

They were again riding along the lake at a quiet pace. A large red cow was walking along ahead of them. It stopped now and then to nibble the grass and would look across the lake. When it came to a thicket, it started, turned about quickly and ran so fast that it almost rushed against Baum's horse.

"That cow has shied at something. There must be something lying there," said Baum, quickly alighting. His dyed hair rose on end, for he felt sure that they would find Irma's dead body the next moment. And he really did find something; for there lay Irma's torn shoes. He knew them. There were blood stains, too, and the grass was crushed, as if a human being had lain there and rolled about in pain.

Baum's hand trembled as he took up the shoes, and he trembled still more when he plucked a little flower. It was a simple leaf cup—the so-called "our-lady's-mantle," the best mountain fodder—and in this little flower there were drops of blood which were still moist.

If she had drowned herself, how had the blood got there? and whence the shoes? and why should the shoes be so far from where Thomas had found the hat? and besides, there were the footprints of larger shoes. If Irma had been murdered, after all! If his brother—

"She's dead—that's the main point," said Baum, consoling himself, "and I have the proofs. What good would it do to draw another being into trouble?" He put the little blood-besprinkled plant away with the letter addressed "To my friend."

Accompanied by the gend'arme, he went to the inn at the landing place where the wanderers had halted that morning.

The gend'arme again enquired about the lady in the blue riding habit.

The manner of the hostess showed that the gend'arme's question had set her thinking. Could it have been the crazy woman who was with the travelers? There had been so much running hither and thither, and carrying of bundles of clothes, and she had had such a queer look about her.

"Do you know anything about it?" said the gend'arme, looking her straight in the face, "speak out!"

"I do n't know a thing," said the hostess. "Did I say a word? What do you want of me?"

There is nothing which the country people dread so much as being called into court in order to bear witness, and so the hostess was careful not to utter a single word that might lead to such a result.

Baum saw that he had made a mistake in taking the gend'arme with him, for his presence alarmed those who might really have something to tell. He, therefore, sent him off, so that he might make further enquiries on his own account.

Baum stood before a looking-glass, combing and brushing his dyed hair which, that day, was unusually refractory. For the first time in his life, he was perfectly modest. He admitted, to himself, that, after all, he was not the right man to follow up such an affair, and that he had wasted too much time already. Others would be before him in profiting by whatever advantage was to be gained from Irma's death. He felt that he had better hurry back to the palace, and that there were others there, enough of them, too, who could work up such a case far better than he.

He endeavored to sound the hostess who, he still thought, knew something of the affair. But he was unsuccessful, for she had not forgotten his comrade, the gend'arme, nor did it help in the least, when he pointed to his buttons and informed her that he was the king's lackey.

It suddenly occurred to him that Walpurga lived in the neighborhood. It was scarcely a year since he had been here with Doctor Sixtus. Irma had always been a friend of Walpurga's, and perhaps was now hiding with her—such high-flown people were capable of anything.

The large boat still lay before the inn. Baum, taking his horse with him, went on board and ordered them to put off at once. He permitted a laborer who arrived with a great barrow-load of hay, which he had gathered on the most dangerous crags, to cross in the same boat with him. They put off. Baum lay down on the wild hay, feeling completely worn out.

He asked the boatmen whether they had seen anything of a drowned person. They answered that, in the morning, a human head with long hair had been seen rising to the surface, and that, in all likelihood, it was a woman.

Baum suddenly drew himself up and, with a bewildered look, gazed over the sparkling surface of the lake. "If the gentleman would like to wait," said the elder boatman to Baum, "the lake will give up its dead at the end of three days." Baum did not care to hear any more; he merely felt in his pocket, to make sure that he still possessed the letter and the blood-stained flower. Having satisfied himself on this point, he stretched himself still more comfortably than before and fell asleep. It was not until the boat struck against the shore that he awoke.

There was no longer any need of hunting up Walpurga; but he

did so, nevertheless, in order to show that he had left nothing undone. He went up to the cottage by the lake and knocked at the door. There was no answer. He looked in at the window. Two large cat's eyes were staring at him. The cat was sitting on the ledge. She was the only one who had remained behind. The room was completely dismantled; not a table or even a chair was to be seen. As if in a dream, or under the influence of a magic spell, he walked back again through the garden.

A chattering magpie sat up in the leafless cherry tree; but not a human being was visible. At last a man passed by. Baum recognized him; it was tailor Schneck.

"Say!" he called out, "what's become of Hansei and Walpurga?"

"They're gone over the mountains. They've moved away and bought a great farm. They call it the freehold; it's way down by the frontier."

Tailor Schneck was in a talkative mood, and enquired whether the gentleman had brought anything from the king and queen. But Baum was sparing of his words. He mounted his horse and rode off in the direction of the summer palace.

In the midst of the hurry and excitement, he had retained enough composure to calculate how this event might serve as a spring-board from which he could bound into a higher position. Henceforth, he would be the king's confidant. He alone knew what had happened and how it had all come about. He looked at the hand which the king would press in gratitude, and felt as if the king had done so already. The head chamberlain was old and decrepit; he would surely step into his place. It would have been better, of course, if he could have reported that Irma had been murdered—the *gend'arme*, like a sleuth hound, had found a clue— But no; that would n't do; it was his brother, after all—although it might be better for him if he were obliged to spend the rest of his days behind the prison bars. He resolved that he would be very good to his mother and brother—that is, after he had become head chamberlain. His sister was dead,—and it was a great pity, too—but he would surely do this, if he got on and if the king should give him lots of money and a good life annuity. Baum was bold enough to tell God that he ought to aid him in obtaining what he wanted, as he meant to do good with it.

As he rode on through the darkness, he would sometimes catch himself falling asleep, for it was the second night he had spent in such unrest—his thoughts were confused and bewildered.

At the last post-house, he left his horse and took a post-chaise.

It was early in the morning, when the carriage arrived at the summer palace. They found it difficult to arouse Baum, and it was some time before he was fully awake and could recollect where he was and what he had brought with him.

Various court carriages were in waiting, and fine saddle-horses were being led from the stables. Baum scarcely heard the salutations of his comrades and the grooms. He entered the palace and ascended the staircase. He was so completely worn out that he felt as if his knees would sink under him. He entered the king's ante-chamber. The old head chamberlain hastily took the pinch of snuff which he had been holding between his fingers, and offered his hand to Baum. Baum sank into a chair, and expressed a wish to be forthwith announced to his majesty.

"I can't yet. You must wait," replied the head chamberlain.

It was only by a violent effort that Baum was enabled to keep his seat and prevent himself from falling asleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE king was in his cabinet at an early hour. He avoided all enervating self-indulgence, and his powers of endurance surpassed those of any other member of the court. It was his custom to take a cold bath every morning, all the year round, and this always gave him new life and strength. He knew nothing of *deshabille*, and always left his bath-room fully dressed for the day.

There was to be a hunt that day, and the king was in hunting costume. He had repaired to the cabinet, for the purpose of dispatching various matters of business that required his immediate attention.

His office was situated in the central building, in the so-called Elector's Tower. It was a large, lofty apartment, and comfortable withal. Its walls were covered with a sort of handy-volume library, military maps and various favorite specimens of plastic art, mostly antiques, of which he had procured copies while yet a prince. There was also a letter-weight, formed of balls from the battle field of Leipsic. The oaken furniture was in the Renaissance style—the large writing table stood in the centre of the room. A water-color picture, representing the queen as a bride, hung on his right.

The king entered and touched the bell which stood on the writing table; the privy councilor presented himself.

He handed several papers to the king, who hurriedly read and signed them. The councilor presented a report in regard to the household ministry. The king, meanwhile, walked up and down the room. Suddenly, he exclaimed:

"What's that?"

From the adjoining room, he had heard sounds as of moving and lifting, and also scraping footsteps, just as if a coffin were being borne away. He touched the bell. In an instant, the door opened and the head chamberlain appeared.

"What insufferable noise is that in the gallery?"

"Your Majesty ordered the large picture to be removed."

The king remembered having given the order the day before.

Although he had, for a long while, been accustomed to seeing the picture in that place, it had yesterday suddenly become repugnant to him. The painting represented Belshazzar seated on his throne and surrounded by his creatures, while a hand issuing from the clouds is writing "Mene Tekel" on the wall. The figures were all in life size. The king had given directions that the picture should be removed to the public gallery.

"I am awkwardly served," said the king, impatiently. "It would have been time to do that while I was at the hunt."

The head chamberlain trembled when he heard these words. His hands dropped, and his head bent as if with shame. It was with difficulty that he dragged himself out through the opposite door. Instant silence ensued. Noiselessly, the painting was placed on the floor and the servants retired.

The chamberlain came around, from the other side, into the ante-room. He sat down in an armchair and took a pinch of snuff between his fingers, but was so absorbed in thought that he forgot to use it until the very moment when Baum entered the room.

He sat opposite Baum. All was silent. Now and then he would shake his head mournfully and look at his large armchair. "Yes, he 'll soon be sitting here, and I 'll be dismissed," thought he. When the privy councilor passed through the ante-chamber, the old chamberlain forgot to bring him his hat. Baum did it in his stead, for Baum was fresh again. This was no time to show signs of fatigue. He felt that he held the winning card, and that now was the time to play it.

The bell in the cabinet was again heard.

"Is there any one else in the ante-room?" enquired the king of the chamberlain.

"Yes, Your Majesty; Baum is here."

"Let him enter."

Baum felt fully conscious of his importance. The king had not ordered him to report to the chamberlain, but had said, "Let him enter." He desired to confer with him in person. The confidential position which he had craved was already his.

Baum's usually grave and submissive manner seemed more impressive than ever before.

"Have you a message?" asked the king.

"No, Your Majesty."

"What have you there?"

"Your Majesty," replied Baum, placing his bundle on the chair and untying it, "I found this hat of Countess von Wildenort in the lake, and these shoes among the willows on the shore."

The king put forth his hand, as if to grasp these tokens, and then drew it back and pressed it to his heart. He stared at Baum and seemed lost in surprise.

"What does it all mean?" he asked, raising his hand to his head, as if to smooth down his hair which stood on end.

"Your Majesty," continued Baum, who himself trembled when he saw the king's agitated manner, "the Countess wore these articles when she rode out with me and ran away."

"Ran away? and—"

Baum laid his hand on his watch, and, although he could not see the dial, he counted the seconds, nevertheless; after which, he softly answered:

"The Countess drowned herself in the lake last night—no, it was night before last. The boatman saw the body of a female rise on the waters and sink again; and to-morrow, which is the third day, the lake will give her up."

The king motioned him to stop—it was enough—his hand trembled; he grasped the back of a chair to support himself, and stared at the hat and shoes.

Baum dropped his eyes. He felt that the king's gaze was fixed upon him, but he still kept looking on the floor which seemed to be rising and lifting the lackey to the level of the throne. In his mind's eye, he already beheld himself at the king's side, and as the confidant of royalty. Baum modestly inclined his head still lower. He heard the king pacing the room, but still he did not look up. "A downcast air," thought he, "betokens perfect obedience and unqualified devotion." The king now stopped before him.

"How do you know it was suicide?"

"I do n't know. If it is Your Majesty's pleasure, the Countess was drowned by others—"

"My pleasure? I? How?"

"I humbly beg Your Majesty's permission—may I tell all?"

"You must—!"

Summoning all his strength, Baum now said:

"Your Majesty, I found the shoes myself, but I got the hat from a man who is fit to do anything—the gend'arme thinks—that it may perhaps be good for the man—he might be pardoned at the end of a year and sent to America—a brother of his—is said to be—there—"

"You speak incoherently."

Baum regained his self-command.

"She may have been murdered by some poacher. The worst of it all is that she sent a letter to her majesty the queen."

"A letter to the queen! Where is it? Give it to me!"

"I have n't it, the maid snatched it from me."

The king sat down.

For a long while, not a sound was heard but the rapid ticking of the clock that stood on the writing table.

The king arose from his seat and walked up and down the room. Then he came towards Baum, who felt as if the hour of judgment had come—as if his life hung in the balance. He tried to loosen his cravat; it seemed too tight for him. He almost felt as if a sword were passing through him.

"Do you know what was in the letter to the queen?"

"No, Your Majesty."

"Was it sealed?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"And have you nothing more?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; I was almost obliged to use violence to get this from the maid; and here, Your Majesty, there is something more. Beside the shoes, there was a pool of blood, and on this little plant there are drops of her blood."

A heart-rending cry of pain escaped the king; then, taking the letter and the plant with him, he went into the adjoining room.

Baum remained standing there waiting.

In the next room, the king sat reading, with tearful eyes.

"She loved me intensely. She was great and beautiful," said he to himself, with pale and trembling lips. His mind was filled with thoughts of her beauty, her voice, her gait, and all her varied charms. And were they all now dead?

The king looked at his hand; the hand which she had so fondly kissed. He took up the letter again and once more read the words: "To my friend." He knew not how it came about, but when he again became conscious of himself, he was kneeling by the chair.

What was to come next?

He remembered that the lackey was waiting in the cabinet. The king felt deeply humbled at the thought of his being obliged to take such a creature into his confidence; but had not men of all kinds long known of his crime? They knew of it, but were silent. A thousand eyes were upon him, a thousand lips were speaking—and all were telling this terrible story. The king looked about him, bewildered. He could scarcely rise. And among the many thousands who had laid their hands in his, and who looked up to him, there was one—Ah! how heavily her hand and her glance now weighed upon him. And her lips; what might they say?

How was he now to approach the queen? If she only knew his deep contrition, she would fall weeping on his neck; for she was divine goodness itself. And yet how had he acted towards her!

He was on the point of sending Irma's last words to the queen. He meant to add some words expressive of his contrition—to lay bare his thoughts and feelings.—It is best, thought he to himself, not to act precipitately, and when he was again on his feet, the consciousness of strength returned. One must be able to fulfill the most difficult duties, even that of repentance, without sacrificing dignity.

The king saw himself in the large mirror. He had forgotten that he was in hunting costume and started at the reflection of himself, as though it were a stranger.

His face was pale, his eyes inflamed. He had shed tears for his friend, and that was enough. What, with some natures, requires months or years, great minds achieve in a few moments. Their years had become as ages. It seemed to him as if the words: "The kiss of eternity," were being wafted towards him on the air, and his mind was filled with memories of that day in the atelier, of the ball, and—

"It was given to thee to live the highest life and then die; to force death to do your bidding. But I cannot do so. I do not live for myself alone!" said he, apostrophizing his friend, and feeling as if a new source of life flowed forth from the depths of his grief.

"And this is thy work," said an inner voice, while his thoughts were of the dead. "In all that's good, your spirit will ever abide with me. Without thee—I would confess it to God, were I now to appear before him—I should never have discovered the deepest springs of my being. If I only knew of some deed which could serve as a fit memorial of thy life."

The king again remembered that the lackey was waiting for him. He felt annoyed that there was not an hour he could call his own, in which to calm his agitated feelings and, for the first time in his life, it flashed upon him: He who commands the services of others, has duties to them, too. They lead a life of their own, extending beyond the time and act of service.

The influence of Irma's last words seemed to hover over his soul like a mist.

He returned to his cabinet. Baum was still standing where he had left him, as silent and as quiet as if he were a chair or table.

"When did you leave there?" asked the king.

Baum told him all.

"You must be fatigued," said the king.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Well then, take a rest. Anything else you may know, you must tell no one but myself—do you understand?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty. I thank you, humbly."

The king had drawn a large emerald ring from his finger, and, while he turned it from side to side, the bright gem sparkled in the sunlight.

Baum thought that the king was about to bestow the ring upon him as a mark of his favor, but his majesty put the ring on again, and asked: "Are you married?"

"I was, Your Majesty."

"Have you any children?"

"An only son, Your Majesty."

"Very well. Hold yourself in readiness; I shall soon have further orders for you."

Baum went out. While hurrying through the ante-room, he graciously addressed the chamberlain with: "Pray don't rise!" There was no need that any one should see what was plainly to be read in every line of his face. The king had addressed him familiarly, and had even enquired about his family. He was, at last, the confidant of royalty; the highest honors now awaited him.

He went to his quarters in the side wing of the palace.

The king was alone. Naught was near him save Irma's hat and shoes. He gazed at them for a long while. What a poem it would make—to bring to the lover the shoes and the hat of his beloved—what a song it would be to sing in the twilight. Such were his thoughts and yet his brain whirled. With trembling hands, he took up the hat and shoes, and locked up the tokens of death in his writing desk.

The feather on the hat broke as he closed the door. A light was burning on the writing table. The king lit a cigar. When his eye fell on the water-color portrait of the queen, he started. He went on smoking violently.

It was not till some time after that, that the king rang the bell and gave directions that the lord steward should be called, but that no one else should be admitted.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN the lord steward entered, the king had recovered his self-command and had settled upon the course he should pursue.

"Have you heard the terrible news?"

"I have, Your Majesty. The Countess's maid has arrived; her mistress was drowned in the lake."

"And—?" asked the king, when he found the lord steward paused.

"And it is also said that, after her father's death, the Countess neither saw nor spoke to any one. But she, nevertheless, wrote a few words to the queen, with the request that Doctor Gunther should deliver them."

"And was it done without previously informing me?"

The lord steward shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well; I know—" continued the king. "Is everything in readiness for the hunt?"

"At Your Majesty's pleasure. The hunting party has been waiting for an hour."

"I'm coming," said the king. "Send Doctor Sixtus to the lake and tell him to take Baum with him, for he knows all about the affair. Let him also take the notary with him, and tell him to see that the body, if found, be suitably interred. I know that you will have everything properly attended to; act on your own good judgment in the matter."

The king laid especial stress on the last words. Everything was to be managed discreetly; every appearance of undue interest, on his part, was to be avoided.

The king knit his brows, as if trying to think of something he had forgotten. "One thing more," added he, hastily. "Go to the poor Countess's brother, and break the news to him as gently as you can. Should he desire leave of absence, you may inform him that it is granted for an indefinite time."

The king passed out through the ante-room and down the staircase. Rest and quiet had been prescribed for the queen, and, in order to avoid arousing her early in the morning, he had bade adieu to her the night before.

The hunting party assembled in the palace-yard greeted the king, who graciously returned their salutation. In an instant, and as if by word of command, the covers were removed from the carriage-horses.

"Colonel Bronnen," exclaimed the king, "come sit with me."

Bronnen bowed in respectful acknowledgment of the compliment, and stepped up to the king's carriage. The gentlemen of the party, amazed at the honor paid the colonel, got into their carriages. Bronnen had bowed respectfully—for the highest honor of the day had been conferred upon him—but there was a struggle within his heart. Had the king the faintest idea that Bronnen felt himself the avenger of old Eberhard, or that he was wrestling with himself as to whether or not he should take up the vendetta? He started when he involuntarily touched the hanger at his side. Was the royal carriage to be the scene of a tragedy, such as history had never yet known? Had Irma vauntingly told the king that he was a rejected suitor for her hand? and was he now to receive the alms of sympathy?

The party drove out into the open country. The king was silent for a long time. At last, he said:

"You were also a true friend of hers. There were few—indeed, there was no one—whom she honored and esteemed as she did you. Her constant wish was that we should be more closely united."

Bronnen drew a long breath. There was no occasion for his saying anything. The king offered him his cigar case.

"Ah, you do n't smoke," he said.

There was another long pause, which was at last broken by the king's asking:

"How long had you known Countess Irma?"

"From childhood. She was the friend of my cousin Emma, with whom she was at the convent."

"It comforts me to be able to speak to you of our friend. You understood her character. It was great, almost supernaturally so. Suffer me to inherit your friendship for her."

"Your Majesty—" replied Bronnen with constrained composure; for his heart was boiling with indignation at the man who had corrupted this noble creature and had driven her to self-destruction. But his military feeling of respect for his superiors held him in check.

"Ah, dearest Bronnen!" continued the king, "no death has ever affected me so. Did she ever speak to you of death? She hated it. And yet, when I look about me, all is life. When a great heart ceases to beat, the whole world should pause, though it were but for a moment. What are we, after all?"

"Each of us is but a small, limited portion of the world. Everything about us has its due sphere of development and right. We are masters only of ourselves, and how few of us can claim to be even that!"

The king looked at Bronnen in surprise. Every one has a sphere of right— What could he have meant by it? Hastily collecting himself, the king replied: "She might have used the very same words. I can easily imagine how much you sympathized with each other. If I understand rightly, you regard suicide as the greatest of crimes?"

"If that which is most unnatural is, therefore, the greatest crime, I certainly do. 'Self-preservation is the first law of nature.' I shall never forget a conversation I had with old Count Eberhard, last winter, upon this very subject."

"Ah yes, you knew him. Was he really a great man?"

"He was a man of one idea, of grand one-sidedness. But perhaps this is a necessary condition of greatness."

"When did you speak with Countess Irma for the last time?"

"After her father's death, when she had shut herself up in impenetrable darkness. I spoke to her, but could not see her, although she extended her hand to me. I believe that I am the last man who held her hand in his."

"Then let me take your hand in mine!" exclaimed the king.

He held Bronnen's hand in his for a long time, until the latter said:

"Your Majesty, confession for confession.—I loved Irma!"

He spoke in a curt and bitter tone. The king hastily withdrew his hand.

"I see," continued Bronnen, gathering all his strength, "that the Countess has mentioned nothing of my suit. I thank her, even now, for this proof of her noble, generous heart. Since she could not honestly return my love, she frankly declined it."

"You? my dear Bronnen!" exclaimed the king, in a tone that betrayed his painful agitation. He could not help thinking of the happy life which, as the wife of this man, Irma might have led. "My poor friend!" he added, in a voice full of feeling.

"Yes, Your Majesty, I have a right to mourn with you, and it

seems as if her powerful, all-embracing mind were still potent, and had caused Your Majesty to call me to your side."

"I never dreamt of such a thing. If I had, I would not have inflicted this pain upon you."

"And I thank Your Majesty for permitting me to share in your grief. Because I share it with you, I am able to comfort you; that is, as far as another can. Since Your Majesty is so frank with me, I must needs be as frank in return."

The king was silent for a long time. Although Bronnen had opened his heart to him, the immediate effect upon him was to rouse a deep feeling of jealousy. He could not brook the thought that another had dared to cast his eye upon Irma; aye, actually to woo her. She seemed no longer entirely his own, since another had stretched out his hand towards her.

Bronnen waited for the king's answer. He could not understand what his silence meant. Had the king repented of his frankness? Did it offend him to find that another had placed himself on a level with him and answered him frankly and fearlessly? The consciousness of royalty trenches upon that of manhood, and perhaps it never happens that a prince thinks of himself simply as a human being. Bronnen felt vexed at the king's silence and averted looks. He could stand it no longer and, at last, feeling that, at such a moment, etiquette could safely be disregarded, he said:

"I think that few men are great-minded enough to keep all knowledge of their conquests to themselves."

This remark had a double meaning, and Bronnen would not have been surprised if the king had turned upon him with a crushing reply. He felt defiant and yet composed. The man to whom he had revealed his soul's secret, must not act as if nothing had happened; he must answer for himself.

The king still remained silent.

"Is Your Majesty not of my opinion?" asked Bronnen, trembling with emotion.

The king turned towards him.

"You are my friend. I thank you, and when we reach Wolfswinkel, you shall receive the highest proof of my confidence."

"There is something more which I think I ought to communicate to Your Majesty."

"Proceed."

"I think I can see the connection between certain recent events. During the late election for deputies, some friends of mine in the Highlands thought of me. They knew of my sincere devotion to my constitutional king."

The king's features betrayed the faintest expression of disgust, while Bronnen continued calmly:

"I informed the voters that I would never accept an election which would range me with the opposition. Count Eberhard was,

therefore, proposed on the very last day, and, to the great surprise of all, accepted the nomination. In order to cast a stigma upon the father, the friends of the present ministry—I am now giving Your Majesty facts, not mere opinions—were not above introducing the relation between Countess Irma and yourself into the canvass."

The king threw his cigar away, and quickly said:

"Go on; tell me more!"

"Count Eberhard was elected in spite of them. While I was at Wildenort, to attend the funeral, I was informed that the first intimation he had received of his daughter's position was conveyed to him at the meeting of electors. On his way home, he received letters which affected him deeply. Nay more, for I have enquired into the matter. I found this piece of a torn letter on the road, and the laborer who worked there told me that the Count had torn up letters at the time mentioned."

Bronnen handed him a paper on which stood the words: "Your daughter has fallen into disgrace, and yet stands in high grace as the king's mistress."

"That may have been written by our saintly Hippocrates," muttered the king to himself.

"I beg Your Majesty's pardon, but if you harbor the slightest suspicion against Doctor Gunther, you do him injustice. I will stake my honor for him, and time will show that I am right."

"Go on!" said the king, impatiently. He felt displeased that Bronnen could read his very thoughts, as it were, and understand what he had only half muttered; and that, understanding it, he had not, as in duty bound, ignored it. He was only to hear what was directly addressed to him.

"On his return from the meeting," continued Bronnen, calmly, "Count Eberhard was attacked by a paralytic stroke which deprived him of the power of speech. During his last moments, Countess Irma was the only one with him. She was heard to utter a terrible cry—when they entered the room, she lay on the floor, and Count Eberhard was dead. Who knows what may have happened there! But, whatever it may have been, I feel sure it was the cause that drove her to this terrible resolve."

"And what purpose does this ingenious combination serve?" asked the king.

Bronnen looked at him with astonishment.

"Its only purpose is to aid in clearing up the mystery."

The long pause which followed Bronnen's remark added to its impressiveness.

"Yes," said the king, resuming the conversation, "how much better it is to clear up all things! That was just her own way of doing; so natural, and yet so clear, so conscious, and yet so strong. Well, be it so. Bronnen, why should I conceal it? I may tell you everything. I loved the Countess. And now—I must say it, for

the thought tortures me—I am almost angry at her. Her suicide has imposed a heavy life-burden upon me. I shall never, to the end of my days, be able to lay it aside. She must have known how it would weigh me down. Tell me, frankly—I beg of you, tell me—is this feeling not a justifiable one?”

“I am not addressing the king, now. I am speaking to the clear-headed, warm-hearted man.”

Bronnen paused. It shocked the king to find himself thus divested of his inborn dignity. What would this stern man, whom he had ordered to forget his rank, say?

“Speak on!” said the king, encouragingly.

“Then I shall speak frankly,” began Bronnen, “as between man and man. When you reproach yourself for feeling that your friend has aggrieved you in imposing this life-burden upon you, it is simply a proof that your true self has been deeply affected. What really torments you, however, is the ghost of your own act. Although our friend, who deserved so well of fate, may, in a fine frenzy, have willingly sacrificed herself, the stern truth still confronts you: you invaded, nay destroyed, her sphere of right, and now you reap the inevitable consequence of what was then begun. The ghost of your own actions disturbs you and will continue to do so, until you perceive the truth. Every human being has its own rights, presenting a barrier which no one, however exalted his position, dare invade. When you fully realize this in yourself, and by your knowledge of sin have overcome sin, then, and not until then, will you be free—no matter what may have gone before. Superstition uses the formula: ‘All good spirits praise the Lord,’ with which to exorcise phantoms. Our good spirit is that inner perception of truth to which we appeal, or rather to whose appeal we give utterance.”

There was a long pause. Bronnen’s face glowed with excitement. The king was chilly, and wrapped himself in his mantle. His eyes were closed. At last he sat up and said:

“I thank her; she has given me a friend, a true man. You will remain to me.”

The king’s voice was hoarse. He wrapped his mantle yet more closely about him, lay back in the corner of the carriage, and closed his eyes. Not another word was uttered until they reached the hunting-seat. The king told his suite that he felt unwell and would not take part in the hunt. The rest of the party plunged into the forest, while the king remained alone with Bronnen.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was after breakfast. The queen, attended by the ladies of the court, was in the music-room.

The first mist of early autumn obscured the landscape, and the morn gave promise of a lovely, bracing day.

Various journals were lying before the queen. She pushed them away, saying :

"How terrible these newspapers are ! What license ! This sheet is usually so unobjectionable ; but even here it is stated that Count Wildenort died of grief because of the conduct of his unmarried daughter. Can such things be permitted ? Was such a thing ever heard of—? Ah, dear councilor !" added she, addressing her private secretary, "there is a sealed letter for Countess Irma on my desk up stairs. Let a messenger take it to her at once. If she could only be kept in ignorance of these terrible newspaper stories ; I hope she may, at all events."

The ladies of the court were engaged with their embroidery. They plied their needles more nimbly than before and did not look up from their work.

Countess Brinkenstein was called away. After some time, she returned, accompanied by the Doctor.

"Ah, welcome !" cried the queen.

At a sign from Countess Brinkenstein, the ladies retired.

"How charming ! you've come just in the nick of time," said the queen. "I am just about to send off a letter for Countess Irma ; you might add a few kind words."

"Your Majesty, Countess Irma will not be able to read your letter of condolence."

"Why not ?"

"The Countess is—very ill."

"Very ill ? You say it in such a—not dangerously, I hope ?"

"I fear so."

"Doctor ! your voice—what is it ? The Countess is not—"

"Dead—!" said the Doctor, covering his face with his hands.

For a few moments there was breathless silence in the great hall. At last the queen exclaimed :

"Dead ! Was it grief at her father's death ?"

The doctor nodded affirmatively.

The flower-table which Irma had painted stood by the queen's side. The queen looked at it for a long while. At last, completely forgetting those about her—her gaze still fixed upon the table which, now that she was weeping bitterly, was wet with her tears—she cried out, in heart-rending accents :

"Oh, how beautiful she was ; how radiant her eyes, how bright her glance, how musical her voice ! Her singing was like the warbling of the lark ! And all this beauty, all this love and goodness is no more ! I would love to see her, even in death. She must be beautiful, a very image of peace. And you say that she died of grief at her father's death, of a broken heart ? Was it one great, convulsive throb of feeling that broke her ardent noble heart ? Oh, my sister—for I loved her as such—forgive me that even the shadow of doubt—Oh, my sister !—the lovely flowers on

this table were conjured up by your hand— And you are faded, withered, decayed! You were lovelier than any flower! I can still see your eye, as it followed every stroke of the pencil. You meant to give me undying flowers, and as an undying flower you shall dwell in my heart."

Her tears fell on the marble flower-table. A little dog came up to her and she said:

"She decked you, too, with flowers. It was on my birthday. She sought to adorn everything that met her eye. And you loved her, too, poor Zephyr; every creature loved her, and now she's dead." She wept in silence, for some time.

"May I wear mourning for my friend?" she enquired, looking up at Countess Brinkenstein.

"Your Majesty, it is not the custom for the queen to go into mourning alone."

"Of course; we are not alone. No, never! All must mourn with us; there must needs be a mourning livery."

She had spoken harshly, and now offered her hand to Countess Brinkenstein, as if in apology, and enquired:

"When is she to be buried, and where? I should like to lay the most beautiful garland upon her grave. I will go to her myself, and my tears shall drop upon her pale face. So fair a life, and so sudden an end! Can it be possible? I must go to her!"

Her eyes seemed fixed on vacancy, while she asked:

"Has the king gone hunting?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"He, too, will weep, for he loved her as if she were his sister. I know it."

The look which Countess Brinkenstein now gave the Doctor seemed to say: "I never gave the queen credit for so much tact and self-command. How naturally she acts, while trying to make us believe that she never knew or suspected that aught was wrong."

"I will go to her!" suddenly exclaimed the queen. "No one shall prevent it. I will go to her and stand by her coffin, by her grave."

Countess Brinkenstein stared at the queen.

The Doctor approached and said:

"Your Majesty cannot see the Countess. Grief for her father's death affected her mind—"

"Then she's not dead?"

"The Countess has undoubtedly drowned herself in the lake."

The queen cast a look of horror at the Doctor. She attempted to speak, but could not. Gunther added:

"She has not left us without a farewell; she left a letter, which I am to deliver to Your Majesty. It must surely be intended to atone for the frightful tidings; even in her last moments, she was true to her affectionate nature."

The queen stared at Gunther, vacantly. She tried to rise, but could not. She mutely motioned him to give her the letter. Gunther handed it to her.

The queen read it and turned pale as a corpse. Her features grew rigid; her hands fell to her side, as if palsied; her eyes closed, an expression as of death lay on her lips. Presently, she shook as if in a chill, and then her face became flushed, as if burning. She sprang to her feet and exclaimed:

"No! no! Have you done this? Could you act thus, Irma? You—"

She fell back in her chair, covered her face with both hands, and exclaimed:

"And she kissed my child, and he kissed it! Oh, they kissed that which was purest of all, well knowing how impure their own lips were. They talked in the loftiest strain, and yet the words did not cut their tongues like sharp knives! Oh, how disgusting! How disgusting, how tainted everything seems! How I loathe myself! And he dared to tell me that a prince could have no private actions, for his deeds are an example to others. Shame! shame! Everything is vile, everything is despicable! Everything!"

She looked around, bewildered. She was as terrible in her indignation, as she had been beautiful in her grief.

With vacant gaze, she regarded every object that had once met Irma's eye, and when her glance again fell upon the flower-table, she turned away with a convulsive start, as if serpents had darted from the flowers. Again, she exclaimed:

"Oh, how loathsome! Oh, how vile, how disgusting! I beg of you, leave me alone! May I not be alone?"

"Let me remain with Your Majesty," said the Doctor, taking her hand, which hung as if lifeless at her side.

Countess Brinkenstein withdrew.

For a long while, the queen did not speak a word. She seemed to be staring at vacancy, breathed heavily and would, at times, start convulsively. She was suddenly seized with a chill, and fell back insensible.

The Doctor bathed her forehead and wrists with a few drops of some restorative, and then called her maid. Accompanied by the latter, he conducted the queen to her apartments, and ordered that she should be put to bed.

"I shall never again see the light of day, nor a human face; and he—and he!" cried she; then she forced her lace handkerchief into her mouth and tore it to pieces with her teeth.

She lay thus for some time, the Doctor sitting silently by her bedside.

At length she heaved a deep sigh, opened her eyes, and said:

"I thank you, but I would like to sleep."

"Yes, do so," said the Doctor. He was about to leave, but she called to him :

"One word more. Does the king know—?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"And he went to the hunt?"

"He is king, Your Majesty."

"I know, I know!—Anything to avoid creating a sensation. Yes, yes."

"I beg of you, Your Majesty, don't think now. Don't worry about anything. Try to sleep."

"We can give ourselves the sleep eternal, but not temporal sleep."

"I entreat you, Your Majesty; do n't give way to this violent excitement; do try to sleep."

"I will, I will. Good night! Give me a sleeping draught, a drop of forgetfulness. Poison were better! Good night!"

The Doctor withdrew, but, by a faint gesture, signified to Madame Leoni, the woman in waiting, that he should remain in the next room.

CHAPTER V.

IT was silent and lonely at the hunting-seat in the Highlands. The walls of the great hall were hung with antlers; a stuffed boar's head stared from over the entrance. A bright fire was burning on the large hearth, for here among the mountains it was already cold. The king sat before the fire, staring at the blazing embers. The flames, intertwining, would leap on high, like so many tongues of fire. The king left his chair several times, but soon sat down again.

Under the antlers, hung tablets marking the year and date of each hunt. A long line of ancestors had contributed to these proofs of victory. If all the guns that had been used in achieving these triumphs were to be fired off at the same moment; if, in addition to this, every horn that had been blown, every dog which had barked and every creature that had cheered, were to find voice, the din thus produced could not be more confusing or bewildering than the thoughts which jostled each other in the head that now rested upon the king's hands.

He arose from his seat and read some of the inscriptions on the wall. He could boast of a mighty ancestry. They were of a lusty and powerful race and, while indulging in the pleasures of the chase and the social board, would speedily have forgotten an adventure like the one that now unnerved him.

Have we become weaker, pettier, more timid?

The king seated himself again and gazed at the fire. He was angry with himself, and yet could not master his weakness.

We are not like the men of the olden time, with their rude simplicity and fearless disregard of consequences. Why have we not inherited the strength of our ancestors, instead of mere pride in their power?

What has happened?

Unfaithfulness cannot be blotted out, nor can the dead be called back to life.

The memory of the days passed in intoxicating happiness rose up before him, as if to say: It dare not, it cannot be.

Has she a right, while destroying her life, to destroy mine, too? And she has destroyed it. Her death will ever remain an inseparable part of myself. I bear a corpse about with me. The guilt of murder dwells within my heart!

He suddenly held his hands before the fire, for they were cold. The flames burned brightly, but they did not warm his hands, and his heart seemed freezing.

Is Bronnen right in refusing to see anything in this terrible affair but the inevitable results of my actions?

He uttered a short laugh, for it had suddenly occurred to him that the world would present a wondrous chaos of bloodshed and murder, if every similar misstep were to produce a like result. How many thousands—

A few words uttered on a lovely morning and during happy times, floated through his mind. It was like suddenly recollecting a long forgotten melody. It was scarcely more than a year ago, that the queen had said, while sitting under the weeping ash: "He who commits a wrong sins for himself, and as deeply as if it were the first time the sin were ever committed."

Ah! why is it that our actions fall so far short of our ideal?

The king was still gazing into the fire. The image of his wife, fading from his mind, was replaced by that of the friend, whom, in fancy, he followed to the bottom of the lake.

He hastily arose, opened the window, inhaled the bracing mountain air and looked out into the dark night.

There, wrapped in slumber, lies the world, the palace with its rich and varied life, your wife, your child; and beyond, as far as the eye can reach, the rich land over which you rule. And while millions of beings cry to you in their hour of need, are you to be dragged down by one mortal?

The king turned round, with the intention of sending for Bronnen.

It is not well to give one's self up to solitude and the company of evil spirits.

And yet he hesitated. From out of the darkness, there rose a demon with a thousand glittering, cunning eyes. He had known him from youth and his name was—distrust. Who knows that this gentleman, with his high sounding phrases, is not availing himself of your humility and the tender mood which has unmanned

you, for his own selfish ends? for all men are selfish, especially when dealing with royalty. He means to rule me and, through me, the country. Who knows whether he ever loved her or declared his passion to her. She neither could nor would have dared conceal that from me. The story was a ready invention of his, intended to make him my companion in grief. But I know no companion. I will have none. If I cannot do all by myself, I am not a king; and if I am not a king, what am I? No, my wise and noble-hearted gentleman—

An inner voice admonished him that it was wrong to judge Bronnen as he judged other men, but he would not listen to it. He drew himself up as if conscious of his power and dignity. Suddenly, a sound from the forest broke upon his ear. It was the first wild, mournful cry of the stag. The huntsman in him was now aroused. His hand quickly sought his weapon, but the thought vanished with the swiftness of the stag's flight through the forest, and gave way to another that raised a smile on the king's countenance. The stag, thought he, was crying to him. Nature knows nothing of such unfaithfulness as that with the thought of which you are now tormenting yourself. The laws of nature do not recognize unfaithfulness; it is simply a violent and arbitrary creation of man. But neither does nature's law recognize a king, or the right of any creature to rule others of the same species. But it is not nature alone that directs human life. There is also another law that dwells within man. At the birth of each beast, the law of its life seems born anew. Man, however, inherits that which has gone before, for he has a history. And, a king more than all others—

The king stood there in silence for a long time. Feeling chilled again, he closed the window and sat down before the fire, in which the embers were still burning. Although he found it irksome to be alone, he yet forced himself to remain so.

The fire was still flickering, and now and then a sharp tongue of flame would dart forth. The king's hand still clasped the silver handle of the tongs long after the fire had ceased to burn. For the first time in his life, he felt conscious of a void within himself—a void which could not be filled. What could it be? Hunting or drilling, jesting or commanding, loving or ruling, none of these filled the aching void. What could it be? this constant unrest, this longing for something that was yet to come.

He had spent a happy youth. The free tone at his father's court had not affected him. He had lived in an ideal world. He was on his travels and far away from home, when the sudden news of his father's death reached him. He had hardly arrived at man's estate, when he was called to the throne. Others might test their affections, might choose— His consort had been selected for him—there was no wooing; a throne, a country, a wife were given to

him. His wife was graceful and pretty. He was fond of her, and she loved him intensely. Suddenly, Irma entered their circle, and the husband, the father, the king, became seized with ardent love. And now she was dead, destroyed by her own rash deed.

Is it still possible for you to subordinate yourself to the law?

You have submitted to it reluctantly, as if it were a clog and a fetter; but is not submission to the law the highest, aye, the only source of indestructible power? Yes, there is an eternal law that binds you to your wife and to your people; in that alone dwells the life eternal.

He was filled with the thought. It was like a deliverance; like the first free breathing of the convalescent. He could not fully grasp the idea, and yet it seemed to him as if he must cry aloud; I am free! free and yet in accord with the law.

He rose quickly. He meant to send for Bronnen, but restrained himself. He had wrestled with himself and would now bear this within himself. He felt as if the aching void, the restless longing for change, had suddenly been filled. He pressed his hand to his throbbing heart.

He rang the bell and sent word to Bronnen that he might retire. He sent his body servant away and retired to his room alone.

Bronnen had been waiting for hours, expecting to be sent for at any moment, and was now busy conjecturing why this had not been done.

Could Irma's death have had more than a mere passing influence upon the king, or had it really helped to reconcile him with the law of life? What proof of his confidence did the king mean to bestow upon him? And when Bronnen had waited for hours, without receiving a message from the king, he could not repress a feeling of resentment. Who could tell? Perhaps the king had forgotten him? He had joined him for awhile in a plaintive duet; but now all was over. That piece had been played and, as with a concert programme, a new one was to come.

One of old Eberhard's sayings occurred to him: "When you are not in the presence of royalty," were the old man's words, "it esteems you as little better than the servants who wait out in the vestibule, or on the steps, with warm mantles for their masters. They go on playing, dancing, laughing and jesting; but which of them stops to think of those who are waiting outside, who have aching legs and are overcome with sleep. But, nevertheless, there you must be, and that without a murmur."

He felt a touch of Eberhard's deep scorn. He, too, was a servant who, while waiting in the ante-chamber, had been forgotten by his master.

When, at a late hour, the king sent him word that he might retire, he nodded his thanks. He has remembered you after all, thought he to himself. Many thanks. Of course they would be less ashamed of a companion in crime.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mountains were still covered with the mists of morning, when the king sent for Colonel Bronnen.

The latter entered with a respectful air. The king advanced towards him and said :

"Good morning, dear Bronnen!" His voice was hoarse; he looked pale and unrefreshed. He took a sheet of paper from the table and said :

"There is the proof that I promised you. Read it."

Bronnen read it and looked at the king in astonishment.

"Do you know the handwriting?" asked the king.

"I do not recognize the handwriting, but the great mind seems familiar. I believe—"

"You are right—they are the last words that our lost friend left for me."

With a certain air of solemnity, Bronnen again placed the letter upon the table. He did not venture to say a word.

"Be seated; I see that you are agitated."

"Certainly, Your Majesty; but, in spite of everything, these lines only confirm my presentiment."

"Your presentiment?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; a presentiment that Countess Irma is not dead."

"Not dead? and why?"

"I know not what to say, but the proofs that were found in the lake and on the shore serve rather to confirm than refute my theory. They are too complete—"

"You loved our friend; I believe it," said the king; "but you did not fully understand her. Countess Irma was incapable of deceit; and have I not told you that boatmen saw the body of a woman floating in the lake?"

"Who knows what they may have seen? Nothing has been found as yet."

"On what do you base your presentiments?"

"It is fully consistent with my exalted opinion of that great woman, to conceive of her having withdrawn to some convent, in order to leave Your Majesty free. Yea, free and true."

"Free and true," said the king, repeating the words to himself. "You utter words which seem irreconcilable, and yet they must be reconciled. Bronnen, you mean to show me a new life-path, and to remove the corpse that obstructs the way, so that, relieved of my burden, I may pass on. But I have strength to listen to the whole truth, and to decline all soothing deceit."

"Your Majesty, I have addressed you in all frankness and with an utter disregard of all other considerations."

The king nodded gently, and Bronnen added :

"Be that as it may, these lines are the utterance of a great soul, and the realization of these thoughts is an end worth dying for. Now, Your Majesty, the weight must be lifted from your soul. Your friend's death or disappearance has not imposed a burden upon you; it has liberated you. For the sake of our country and the realization of the highest laws, she has departed."

"Free and true," said the king again, in a low voice. "I would like, this very day, to change the legend on my coat of arms and replace it with those words. But I will prove—and to you alone do I confess it—I will prove that they dwell within me! Yes, my friend, I read those lines many a time during the night. When they first appealed to me yesterday, I did not understand them; but now I do. Let us, as long as we live, quietly celebrate the memory of this day. You uttered an expression yesterday that startled, nay, offended me."

"Your Majesty!"

"Calm yourself. You see we are friends. I promise you never again to allow my displeasure to last over night."

"What expression?"

"It was 'constitutional king'; and while, last night, I read this letter again and again, that phrase was ever between the lines. Can one be a sovereign and yet subject to the law? Mark me, Bronnen; if I were in the presence of Eternal God, I could not open my heart more freely. This expression of yours and our friend's appeal aroused me. Can I remain a sovereign, a complete man and king, and at the same time be fettered? At last I understood it. She says: 'Be one with the law, with your wife and your people.' Is there free love in marriage? Can there be a free king in a constitutional government? There lies the difficulty. But I have conquered it. Fidelity is love awakened to itself. The life I lead, my crown, my wife, indeed all that I possess, became mine by virtue of my rank. Last night, I earned the right to call them mine. To be able, in all moods, to hold fast to what has, heretofore, only been the result of impulse; to infuse new life into one's actions, and to feel that they are in accord with one's self—Ah, you can have no idea of the spirits I wrestled with; but I conquered at last. 'Free and true,' is my motto for evermore."

Bronnen was deeply agitated, and, in his enthusiasm, rushed towards the king.

"I have never bent the knee to human being, but now I should like to—"

"No, my friend," cried the king. "Come to my heart. Let us, holding fast to one another, act and work together. I will prove that a king can act freely, and that his freedom and his friendship are something more than a mere fairy ideal. Yesterday, I felt as if you were my father-confessor. It does me good to say this. I have come to know that the man whose hand and heart are impure

is unfit to labor for the highest and noblest ends. There is no greatness which is not based on true morality, and, in uttering these words, I utter a verdict upon my past life. I am not ashamed to acknowledge to you, what I have already said to myself. And now let us, as men, consider what is best to be done."

Bronnen's countenance seemed illumined with a ray of purest joy.

"A bright, unclouded spirit is with us."

"Let her memory be held in honor."

"I do not mean her," said Bronnen. "When I spoke to Count Eberhard, he said: 'Honor pledges us to morality; fame, still more so; and power, most of all.'"

The king and Bronnen discussed many other topics. With his friend, the king could frankly and unreservedly show the change which had taken place in him. But with the world, the court and the country at large, it behooved him to avail himself of more gradual methods. A king dare not publicly repent.

Bronnen was, in secret, appointed prime minister.

They remained at the hunting-seat and joined in the chase. They deemed it best to postpone their return to court long enough to permit certain matters to settle themselves in the meanwhile.

CHAPTER VII.

"**H**IS MAJESTY desires me to assure you of his sincere sympathy, and to say that if you wish to go away in order to arrange your family affairs, to pursue investigations at the lake, or to divert your thoughts by travel, you are at liberty to do so. Leave of absence, for an indefinite period, will be sent after you."

These were the words with which the lord steward, who had been sent to inform Bruno of his sister's death, concluded his message. He pressed Bruno's hand, kissed him on both cheeks and left.

As soon as he was out of doors, the lord steward fanned himself with his pocket handkerchief. The dread task which had fallen to his lot had greatly agitated him, but still he could not help admitting that Bruno had received the terrible news with great composure.

While the lord steward remained in the room, Bruno had sat on a sofa in the corner, covering his face with his handkerchief, and listening quietly and patiently to it all, as if it were the news of some strange, remote event that in no way affected him.

But now he was alone again. He sat silent for awhile, unconsciously playing with a scented note which he had received a little while before.

Suddenly, he sprang from his seat as if crazed, seized a chair and broke it. This seemed to do him good. Then, as if possessed by

a demon, he threw himself on the floor and lay there, raving, writhing, and screaming fearfully.

The servant entered and, finding his master lying on the floor, lifted him up.

"I'm ill!" said he. "No, I'm not ill! I won't be ill! Go at once to chamberlain Von Ross or to intendant Von Schoning, and request one of those gentlemen to come to me directly. If my wife enquires for me, say that I've gone out with the master of the household."

The servant went away and Bruno stood at the window, looking out into the street. The mist had disappeared and now revealed the park in all its beauty. The gardener was removing the pots that contained faded flowers, and replacing them with fresh ones. Arabella's pet greyhound was sitting on the gravel path; it looked up at its master and, in token of its joy, jumped about and ran around the arbor.

Although Bruno saw it all, he was thinking of something quite different.

"Ha ha!" he laughed, "I never thought that this world was anything but an empty farce. He who frets away an hour is a fool. Now I am quite free," said he, drawing himself up, "quite free. Now there is no one on earth for whom I need care. World, I am free and alone! And now for seventy years to come, give me all thy pleasures! Thou can'st not harm me! I trample everything under foot!"

He stopped to listen—but no one came.

Bruno had always lived in society, but had never passed any time in the society of his own thoughts. Now, when he was lonely and in mourning, they came to him—neglected-looking companions with an eager air and merry glances—and cried: "Leave it all; come with us! Let us be merry! What avails your grieving? You will be old before your time."

He stood before a mirror, and they said to him: "See how horrible you look."

He could not rid himself of his companions. They played merry dances; they jingled their gold and cried: "*va banque*;" they rattled the glasses and showed him voluptuous and seductive forms, and he could hear rude and wanton laughter. They filled the room; they seized him and wanted to dance about with him; but he stood firm, clenching his fists and unable to go. And then they cried to him: "We know you! You are a silly boy and care for what the world thinks. You have no courage! Cheer up! Let them taunt you, but be merry, nevertheless. The day you lose in fretting, no one can ever give back to you. Fie! at this begging for sympathy! Go about and say: 'I'm a poor man, my father's dead and my sister drowned herself.' Get some one to make a song for you, and another to paint a little sign, and

wander about from fair to fair, asking for an alms. Fie! fie! You must do one thing or the other: despise the world, or let it pity you. Which do you choose? How often have you said: 'I despise the world'—and what makes you afraid? You are sitting there, and would like to go out; who closes the door? who has tied your horses' feet? You are alone. The dear friends, the kind-hearted beings, the sympathizing souls, will come and say: 'Be firm; be a man; conquer your grief!' And what will the dear souls do for you? They will give you the alms of sympathy and then leave you in solitude, while they go their way in search of pleasure. As long as there is playing, dancing, drinking, they are true and enduring friends; but no feast will be put off for your sake, nothing will be changed. If you mean to enjoy the world you must despise mankind. They merely say to you: 'Be a man'—but be one."

His thoughts worked him into a frenzy. The next few days seemed a yawning unfathomable abyss staring him in the face. All was empty, void, hollow, joyless, consuming solitude.

He was at last released, for the servant entered and announced the intendant.

They had not been great friends, but now Bruno embraced the intendant as if he were the only friend he had in the world, and lay on his neck sobbing and begging him not to abandon him to solitude. He raged and raved and, with a strange mixture of blasphemy and mockery, reviled his fate. "Oh the terrible days that await me!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"Time heals all wounds," said the intendant.

"But to pass weeks, aye months, in mourning!" cried Bruno again.

The intendant started. He had received an insight into this man's character. What grieved him most was the long period during which he would have to seem to be in mourning.

It could not have happened at a more unfavorable time.

Bruno had entered two of his best horses for the races which were to come off in a few days. He had intended to ride Zuleika himself in a trotting match, and, for the great hurdle race, he had carefully trained Fitz, his groom. The name was really Fritz, but Fitz sounded better. Fitz, Baum's son, was a thorough rascal, in whom his father took great pride. His future was assured, for there was no doubt that if Fitz did not break his limbs, he would be the first jockey in the stables. He sat his horse like a cat, and it was impossible to throw him.

The weather was charming. There were just enough clouds to shield one from the burning rays of the sun, and, during the night, there had been a gentle rain which had improved the course. Fitz, in his green and white suit, would surely win the first prize. Bruno was not a little proud of Fitz's livery. He had, as it were, divided

him in two, from the crown of his head to his feet; his dress was grass-green on the right and snow-white on the left. What a pity that there are but seven cardinal colors, thus affording so little chance to indulge one's love of variety. But still, persistence can accomplish much, and while Bruno held his handkerchief before his face, he smiled at the thought of Fitz with one boot green and the other white.

"Of course, I shan't ride," he said to the intendant. "Do you think I ought to allow my jockey to do so? I may do that; may I not?" he hastily added, as if fearing a negative reply. "They would think it mean of me, if I did n't. I have a large amount staked on the race. I shall let Fitz ride. Yes, I must; there's no harm in that."

He had scarcely finished speaking, when Fitz entered the room. In a harsh voice, Bruno told him to go away. He was determined to act as though he had forgotten all about the races. That would prove his sorrow far more effectually than if he were to withdraw his engagement. He would submit to the fine for non-appearance, and the world would thus perceive that his grief was deep enough to make him forget everything.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE intendant sat on the sofa with Bruno. He held Bruno's hand in his—it was hot with fever.

Now that he had found the key to Bruno's character and present mood, he knew what was meant when the mourner exclaimed:

"I know how it is in the world. To-day and to-morrow there is hunting at Wolfswinkel; and day after to-morrow, the races. I am only surprised that I did n't forget everything in that one hour. His excellency Von Schnabelsdorf is now 'intellectualizing' with the handsome wife of ambassador Von N—. After that, comes guard-mounting, and, this evening, there will be a *banquet* at Prince Arnold's.—Ah! the world goes on in its beaten track. If I could only forget it; for it forgets me.—Who has a thought for the solitary mourner? Oh, forgive me, my beloved, my only friend in this world! You will stay with me! You will never, never leave me! Do n't leave me alone, or I shall go mad!"

The intendant felt sincere pity for the poor man. He had been invited to dine with the master of the horse, and merely wished to leave for a few moments in order to present his excuses in person. But Bruno would not permit him to go, and induced him to send his excuse in writing.

"Of course I'll stay with you," said the intendant, consolingly. "At such moments, the presence of a friend is like a light in the night, obliging or, at all events, enabling one to see surrounding

objects ; it teaches us that the world has not yet ceased to exist, and that we do wrong to bury ourselves in solitude."

"Oh, you understand me ! Tell me what to do, what to begin ! I know nothing. I am like a child that has lost its way in the dark woods !"

"Yes, that you are."

Bruno started. The intendant's confirmation of his opinion of himself rather displeased him.

"I am so weak now," said he. "Just think of what I've had to suffer during the last few days !"

There was a strange mixture of gentleness and bitterness in his tone.

"May I smoke ?" he asked.

"Certainly. Do anything that pleases you."

"Ah, no ! nothing pleases me. And yet I should like to smoke."

He lit a cigar.

The world had, however, not quite forgotten him, as he had said in his anger. A visitor was announced. He hurriedly put the cigar away. The world was not to see him smoking, and was not to imagine that he was unfeeling, or that he did not mourn for his father and sister.

There were many visitors, and Bruno was again and again obliged to display his grief and to accept the sympathy offered him. He now saw how the rumor of Irma's death had spread throughout the city, from the palace to the hovel. People whom he hardly knew, and others who were even ill-disposed towards him, came. He was obliged to receive all politely, to thank them, and to accept their assurances of sympathy, while he fancied he could detect malicious pleasure in many an eye. But he was obliged to ignore this and, although now and then a nervous twitching of his features almost betrayed him, he managed to keep up the semblance of all-absorbing grief.

His companions in pleasure also visited him, and it was quite curious to witness the grave air which the young cavaliers assumed, now and then casting a glance at the great mirror in order to see whether the serious expression became them well. It seemed almost comical to think that the man who was always the merriest in the party, and who could make the best and most unequivocal jokes, should now be so downcast. They seated themselves ; they straddled the chairs and rested their arms on the backs ; they lit their cigars, and much was said of their respective "papas."

"My papa has been dead this two years."

"My papa is ill."

"My papa intends to retire on his pension."

Some one asked : "Bruno how old was your father ?"

He did not know, but answered at a venture :

"Sixty-three."

They also spoke of the races; at first cautiously and almost in a whisper, but afterward in a loud voice. They spoke of Baron Wolfsbuchen's great loss.

"What happened to him?"

"Fatima, his splendid black mare, would n't obey him, and he struck her over the mouth with his sword. He had forgotten that the blade was sharp."

They spoke of the loss that he had incurred by forfeiting the stakes, and of the damage done his horse; but no one found fault with his cruelty.

At last his comrades left. As soon as they were out of doors, they stretched themselves. "Well, well; that's over." A visit of condolence is a sort of funeral parade, and one's words are like muffled drums. Before they left the carpeted staircase, they began to whisper scandal, and to tell that Bruno had forbidden his mother-in-law to come to the capital, as their majesties had been gracious enough to stand as sponsors to his young scion. The whole party concluded to lunch together, and have some wine. There were merry goings on at the French restaurant, and Bruno was often the topic of conversation.

"He will be enormously rich, for he inherits a double share."

"If he had known as much a year ago, who knows whether he would have married Steigeneck. His debts were not so heavy but that he could have held out for another year."

"He also inherits his sister's jewels, and they are of immense value."

As if he were two beings in one, the one here and the other there, Bruno's thoughts followed the companions who had left him. He surmised what they were saying, and once started as if he had heard laughing behind him. It was nothing, however, but his sister's parrot which he had ordered to be brought into his ante-room. He had it taken back to Irma's apartment, as he did not know whether it really belonged to her, and its eternal "God keep you, Irma," annoyed him.

He walked about the room for a long while, with his thumbs stuck into his closely buttoned coat, and his fingers playing a merry but inaudible tune upon his breast. The visits of condolence really annoyed him. It is so irksome to put on a sorrowful look, to listen to words of consolation, to offer thanks for sympathy, while all is a lie or, at most, an empty form— It is simply one's duty to express sympathy with the afflicted. Perhaps people regret that they cannot, in such cases, send their empty carriages, as they do at funerals— Is it not enough to let the world know that the grief was great and general, and that the funeral was a large one? These were Bruno's angry and ill-natured thoughts. "Then they go off," thought he, "the young and the old, in uniform and in

citizen's dress, twisting their moustaches and stroking their chins, with a self-complacent air, while they say to themselves: 'You've done a good deed; you are a man of politeness and feeling—' and when they get home they tell their wives and daughters: 'The king's aid-de-camp is thus and so—' and then they eat and drink and drive out, and when they reach the house they say: 'We ought to feel satisfied when everything goes well with us, and our family escapes misfortune.' They use the misfortunes of others as they would a platform, from which to get a better view of their own prosperity." Bruno's fingers moved yet more quickly than before—death, grief, sickness were intended for the lower orders, and not for the higher classes. The world is miserably arranged after all, since there is no preservative against such ills, and since one cannot purchase immunity from them.

His excellency Von Schnabelsdorf also came. Bruno hated him at heart, for it was he who had invented the sobriquet of "Miss Mother-in-law" for Baroness Steigeneck, the whilom dancer. Bruno, however, felt obliged to act as if he knew nothing of it, to take his hand in the most polite and grateful manner, and to receive a kiss from the lips which had put a stigma upon his family; for Von Schnabelsdorf stood highest at court, and Bruno could not do without his friendship, which was doubly necessary, now that his main support, his sister, had been taken from him.

Thus Bruno felt annoyed at the visits of condolence he received, as well as at those which were withheld. The world was considerate enough to refrain from alluding to anything more than Irma's sudden and unfortunate death; how she was thrown from her horse and fell into the lake. The vice-master of the horse maintained that Pluto had never properly been broken in. Bruno, himself, behaved as if he really believed that Irma had met with her death by accident.

But it seemed as if he delighted to picture to himself the scene of the suicide and to think of Irma at the bottom of the lake, held fast to the rocks by her long hair. He could not banish the awful picture, and at last threw open the window, so that he might divert himself with external objects.

Bruno did not care to eat or drink anything; the intendant could only induce him to take some food, by ordering dinner for himself. Bruno felt obliged to sit down with him, and, at every mouthful, he said: "I can't eat." At last, however, he ordered some champagne.

"I must build a fire in my engine!" said he, gnashing his teeth, while he thrust the bottle into the wine-cooler. "I derive as little pleasure from this as the engine does from the coals."

He drank down the wine hastily and went on eating, with a woe-begone expression, as if he would, at any moment, burst into tears.

He ordered more champagne.

"Did you see that?" said he, looking out of the window. His eyes were inflamed. "There's Kreuter, the merchant, riding Count Klettenheim's chestnut gelding. They must have played high last night, that the Count should give up his horse; why, it's the pride of his life, his honor. What is Klettenheim without his gelding. A mere cipher, a double zero. Ah, my dear friend, excuse me! I am feverish, I am ill. But I won't be ill! I shall say nothing more. Go on; say whatever you please."

The intendant had nothing to say. He felt as ill-at-ease as if he were shut up in a dungeon with a maniac.

"I wish to speak with lackey Baum," cried Bruno, suddenly. The intendant was obliged to dispatch a telegram to the summer palace, asking that Baum should be sent to the king's aid-de-camp.

Bruno let down the curtains, ordered lights and more wine, and gave orders that no one should be admitted. The intendant was in despair, but Bruno exclaimed:

"My dear friend, everything on earth is suicide, with this difference, however—here, one can always come to life again. The hour one kills is the only one that is rightly spent."

The intendant feared an outbreak of delirium, but Bruno was not one of those cavaliers who have only as much mind as the champagne they have just tossed down inspires them with and who, at best, can only write a gallant billet-doux or devise a witty impropriety. At other times, Bruno would have laughed at the man who would ask him to adopt a system as his own, and yet he now asserted that he had one and, filling his glass again, exclaimed: "Yes, my friend; there are only two kinds of human beings in the world."

"Men and women?" said the intendant, who thought it best to fall in with his vein, in order more easily to divert him from it.

"Pshaw!" interrupted Bruno. "Who is speaking of such things? Listen, my friend; the two human species are those who enjoy and those who suffer. He who lives for so-called ideas—for the good, the beautiful, the true. The man with an ideal may sacrifice his life, or be burnt at the stake. It is his duty. His life is a short and uneventful one, but is compensated by the long and enduring remembrance in which he is held by posterity. That balances the reckoning. Is it not so?"

The intendant was obliged to assent. What could he do?

"And the second species," added Bruno, "includes ourselves—those who enjoy. The best thing in the world is enjoyment without consequences. After I have been smoking, gaming or listening to music, I can do anything; nothing disturbs me then. Other pleasures unfortunately have consequences. One ought to have no family—no family—by all means, no family."

Bruno suddenly burst into tears. The intendant was at a loss how to help him, and reproached himself for not having induced Bruno to refrain from drinking and talking. Bruno threw his head back, and the intendant wrapped a piece of ice in a handkerchief and laid it on his forehead.

"Thanks!" said Bruno, closing his eyes; "thanks!"

He was soon asleep.

The servant entered. Bruno awoke. The intendant drew aside the curtains and opened the windows. It was high noon.

Word came that Baum had already started off with Doctor Sixtus, the court physician. "Then we will go without them," said Bruno, who had regained his composure.

"We?"

"You see, my grief makes me think that I have already told you everything. We must go to the lake to look for traces of my unfortunate sister. Have I really said nothing of this to you before?"

"No—but I am at your service. I will ask for leave of absence for myself and for you, too."

"There's no need of that. His majesty has already offered it to me. Your Majesty is very gracious—very. Do you think we serve you? Ha, ha! we only serve you because we can enjoy ourselves better, and in more varied ways, at your court. You are our host, and do not mind stealthily taking a tit-bit yourself, behind the bar—I beg of you, my dear friend—what did I say? You heard nothing—did you? It was delirium! I am growing mad! I must go out! Let us start this very day!"

The intendant consented and left him for an hour, in order to arrange various matters before his departure.

Bruno ordered his trunks to be packed and gave instructions that two saddle-horses should be sent to the lake at once.

CHAPTER IX.

BRUNO was standing in his room, surrounded by luggage of various shapes, when a servant announced his gracious mother-in law.

"She here? And in spite of my prohibition?" thought he to himself. "Show her in," he said to the servant, who quickly, threw open the folding doors, and closed them again when the lady had entered. "Ah, my dear mother!" exclaimed Bruno, who was about to hurry forward to embrace her, but she coolly offered him her hand and said:

"No, no," and then, seating herself on a sofa, she continued:

"Draw near; take a seat."

"Do you know—?" enquired Bruno.

"I know all; you need tell me nothing."

"I thank you for coming to offer me your sympathy."

"I'm delighted—I meant to say that I feel comforted to find you so composed. Arabella knows nothing as yet?"

"No."

"Nor need she know of it.—What is the meaning of all this luggage?"

Bruno looked at her in astonishment. Who had any right to enquire, and in such a tone?

"I'm going on a journey," he answered bluntly, and then, in order to prevent a scene, he added in a gentle tone: "As her brother, I must make enquiries in regard to the accident."

"I approve of that; it's quite proper," replied the Baroness. "Have you already had an understanding with him?—You do n't seem to understand me, as you do n't answer; I mean with this king."

"Yes," replied Bruno boldly, "but I have pledged my word to let it go no further."

"Very well, I respect your discretion; but now, a frank word with you. Please close the portiere."

Bruno did as he was ordered, but ground his teeth as he walked towards the door. When he returned again, his manner was as polite and attentive as before.

"Proceed," said he, "no one hears us; a mourner listens to you patiently."

"A mourner! We have greater cause to mourn than you have. We thought we had allied ourselves with one of the best families in the land." Bruno started as if angry.

"Pray drop your acting for the present," continued the Baroness, whose voice and appearance had changed. "We are alone now, and unmasked. In spite of the outward show of politeness, you have never treated me with the respect which I have a right to demand. Do n't contradict me; please let me finish what I am about to say: When I calmly reflected on the matter, I was not angry with you on that account. I knew my position. But now, my dear son-in-law, matters have changed. I was what your sister was, but I never feigned virtue. The world esteemed me at my true value—"

Bruno heaved a deep sigh.

The Baroness continued, grinding her teeth with anger as she spoke:

"When your sister was so kind to us, I could have knelt to her in humility. She must give me back my humility, though she be in hell! It was not she who was the better; it was I— But now, my son-in-law, your disdainful behavior must cease. Let me tell you, you ought to feel glad that we've allied ourselves with you. But we shall never let you feel it; that is, if you conduct yourself in a becoming manner."

"And am I not doing so?" asked Bruno, who, during this attack, had entirely lost his self-command.

"We will see; but, first of all, let me tell you that, after this, I shall reside with Arabella as often and as long as I choose to. This insipidly moral queen has been taught a lesson, too. At present, however, I have no desire to appear at court. But the social circle is open to me—I shall enter it, arm in arm with you, my amiable, my gallant son."

The old woman rose and, bowing gracefully, offered her arm to Bruno. The latter took his mother-in-law's hand in his own and held it to his lips.

"Fie! you've been drinking wine, in your grief!" cried the old danseuse, hurriedly putting her fine and strongly-perfumed handkerchief to her lips.

"Miss Mother-in-law—" the words were on the end of Bruno's tongue; he would like to have hurled them at her. Steps were heard. A moment afterward, the intendant entered, his presence serving as a great relief to Bruno.

"I beg pardon! do n't let me disturb you," said he, when he saw Bruno's mother-in-law.

"You're not disturbing us," replied Bruno, quickly. "In spite of a violent attack of fever, our dear mother, now our grandmother, has hastened to console us. I am fortunate in still having a few faithful relatives, and a friend like yourself. I shall now live entirely for the family still left me."

The Baroness nodded a pleased assent. She was thoroughly satisfied with Bruno's first rehearsal of his new rôle.

"We shan't leave to-day?" enquired the intendant.

"Yes, yes. We must not lose another minute."

The mother-in-law undertook to tell Arabella of Bruno's departure, and to inform her that he had been sent away on public business.

While slowly drawing on his black gloves, Bruno thanked his mother-in-law. He thanked her sincerely, for while he well knew that he was about to enter upon a state of dependence, and that her presence in his house would prove distasteful to him in many ways, he, at the same time, consoled himself with the hope that she would prove a companion to his wife, and that he could thus absent himself from home more frequently, and for longer periods, than he had before done; for he felt it not a little irksome to be obliged to spend so much of his time with his wife. The leave-taking was short, but hearty. Bruno was permitted to kiss his mother-in-law's cheek. After he got into the carriage, he rubbed his lips till they were almost sore, in order to wipe the rouge off of them.

It was already evening when they drove off, and they passed the night at the first posting-house. Bruno lay down on the bed to rest himself "for a little while," but he did not awake until late the following morning.

CHAPTER X.

THE queen, overcome with grief, lay sleeping in her apartment.

The court ladies were gathered together on the terrace under the weeping ash, and did not care to leave one another. It seemed as if a fear of ghosts oppressed them all. It was but a few days since Irma had been in their midst. She had been sitting in the chair without a back—she never leaned against anything. The seat she had occupied remained empty, and if the paths were not freshly raked every morning, her foot-print would still be there. And now she had vanished from the world. Her light had been extinguished and in so terrible a manner. Who could tell how long her ghost might haunt the palace and what mischief it might do. The world, at last, knew what had been going on.

The ladies were busily engaged at their embroidery. At other times, they would take turns in reading aloud; but to-day their book—it was a French novel, of course—remained untouched. They were intensely interested in the story, but no one ventured to propose that the reading should be gone on with, nor did sustained conversation seem possible. Now and then a voice was heard: "Dear Clotilde," "dearest Hannah, can you lend me some violet, or some pale green?" "Oh, I tremble so, that I cannot thread my needle; have you a needle-threader?"

It was, fortunately, at hand. They were, none of them, willing to appear so little moved as to be able to thread a needle.

They deplored Irma's fate, and it did them good to be able to show how kind and merciful they were. They felt happy in being able to accord their pious forgiveness to the unhappy one, and, since they had been so gentle and forgiving, they felt it their right to denounce her crime the more severely. It was thus they avenged themselves for the self-humiliation they had endured; for, while Irma was the prime favorite, they had paid greater homage to her than to the queen.

They never mentioned the royal couple except in terms of respect—with all their apparent confidence, they distrusted each other. They felt that there was trouble ahead, but that it was best for them to appear unconscious of it.

Countess Brinkenstein was the only one who had a good word to say for Irma.

"Her father was greatly to blame," said she; "it was he who instilled this belief into Irma."

"And yet he had her educated at the convent."

"But she inherited from him a contempt for all forms and traditions, and that was her misfortune. She had a lovely disposition, was richly endowed by nature, and her heart was free from the slightest trace of envy or ill-nature."

No one ventured to contradict Countess Brinkenstein. Perhaps, thought they, etiquette requires us to speak well of Irma and to forget her terrible deed.

"Who knows whether her brother would have married the Steigeneck, if he had known that he was to inherit everything!" softly whispered a delicate and languishing little lady to her neighbor, while she bent over her wool-basket.

The one whom she had addressed looked at her with a sad, yet grateful expression. She had once loved Count Bruno and still loved him.

"I have a book of hers."

"And I have one of her drawings."

"And I have some of her music."

They shuddered at the thought of possessing articles which had once been hers, and determined that everything should be sent to her brother.

"I passed her rooms, early this morning," said Princess Angelica's maid of honor—she always seemed as if half-frozen and rubbed her hands and breathed on her finger-tips while she spoke—"the windows were open. I saw the lonely parrot in his cage, and he kept calling out; 'God keep you, Irma.' It was dreadful."

They all shuddered, and yet they felt a secret satisfaction in dwelling on the subject. The pious court lady joined the circle, and mentioned that Doctor Sixtus had just taken leave of her, that he had started for the Highlands, that Fein, the notary, had accompanied him, that he had also taken Baum along, and that they meant to search for the body of Countess Irma.

"Will he bring her here, or to Wildenort castle?"

"How terrible, to be gaped at in death by common people!"

"Horrible! it makes me shudder."

"Pray let me have your vinaigrette."

A bottle of English smelling-salts was passed round the circle.

"And to have every bystander volunteer a funeral sermon!"

"How improper to take one's life in so public a manner!"

"If there were no horrid newspapers," whined the freezing court lady.

The conversation gradually assumed a more cheerful tone.

"Ah me!" exclaimed a pert and pretty court lady, "how we were all obliged to 'enthuse' about the beauties of nature and the genial traits of the lower orders during her life and reign. Now, I imagine one may at last venture to say that nature's a bore, and that the lower orders are horrid, without being regarded as a heretic."

In spite of the malice that flavored it, they found the remark both just and appropriate. In a little while they were all conversing and laughing, just as if nothing had happened.

A wanton boy has shot a sparrow. The rest of the flock are

very sad and pipe and prate about the matter for a while ; but soon they hop about again, and chirrup as merrily as before.

To give truth its due, it is necessary to state that many of the ladies would have been glad to speak well of Irma, but they kept such feelings in the background. Of all things in the world, they dreaded showing themselves sentimental.

It was not until Countess Brinkenstein again began to speak, that the rest of the company became more calm and dignified than they had been.

Countess Brinkenstein's demeanor seemed to say : "I am, unfortunately, the one who prophesied it all ; and now that it has all come to pass as I said it would, I am not in the least proud of it." It was both her right and her duty to speak compassionately of Irma, and yet, at the same time, mildly to point a moral.

"Eccentricity ! Ah yes, eccentricity !" said she. "Poor Countess Wildenort ! The publicity of her deed is, in itself, a serious offense ; but do not let us, while thinking of her terrible fate, forget that she was undeniably possessed of many good traits. She was beautiful, anxious to please every one, and yet without a trace of coquetry. She possessed intellect and wit, but she never used them to slander others. A poor eccentric creature !"

This disposed of Irma, and the other court ladies had, at the same time, received a lesson.

The eyes of all were directed towards the valley.

"There goes the carriage !" they said. Doctor Sixtus saw the ladies and saluted them. The notary sat by his side, and Baum sat opposite. He was too tired to sit up on the box. "It is scarcely a year since we made this same journey together," said Sixtus to Baum.

Baum was not in a talkative mood ; he was too tired. After great preparations, he had that day passed his examination, and could say to himself that he had not come off without honor. Although he was not accustomed to find himself inside of the carriage, he yet thought he might take it for granted that this would henceforth be his place. He was about to become a different, a more exalted personage. He had, indeed, become such already—all that was needed was the outward token. He would have been willing to remain a simple lackey. Perhaps the king desired to have it so, lest he might betray himself. He was willing to let him have his own way, even in this. He and the king knew how they stood towards each other. He smiled to himself, and felt like a girl whose lover has declared his affection for her ; the formal wooing can take place at any time.

When Doctor Sixtus helped himself to a cigar, Baum was at once ready with a light. That, however, was, for the present, his last act of service. Nature was not to be overcome and Baum was impolite enough to fall asleep in the presence of the gentlemen.

But he was so well schooled that, even while asleep, he sat upright and ready at any moment to obey their commands.

It was not until they halted, that Baum awoke. The notary's searching questions greatly disturbed his comfort. What matters the death of a countess, thought he, if one can rise by means of it. He was greatly annoyed that his family—his mother, his brother and his sister—were mixed up in the affair; and had n't Thomas said something about the death of Esther, or was it merely a dream? Events had succeeded each other so rapidly that they quite bewildered him.

Doctor Sixtus apologized to the notary for Baum's disconnected narrative.

Baum looked at him in amazement. Did he already know that Baum was about to be advanced, and did he mean to curry favor with him? He was cunning enough to think of such a thing.

Baum resolved, for the present, only to show the spot where he had found the hat and shoes, and to leave his mother and brother entirely out of the affair. At all events, he would not drag them into it, and suggested that they should take the forester with them. They found him at last, and then wended their way towards the assize town in which Doctor Kumpan lived.

Sixtus sent for the latter. He soon came to the inn, and the jolly fellow was lavish in his praise of Countess Irma. He thought it greatly to her credit that she had had courage to live and die as she chose. Besides that, Kumpan delighted in joking his friend, in regard to the great missions on which he had been employed, looking up wet nurses and hunting corpses. He asked for the privilege of being permitted to dissect the Countess.

Doctor Sixtus did not in the least relish the coarse humor of his former fellow student. Doctor Kumpan told him of the great change that had taken place in Walpurga's circumstances, that she and the rest of her family had moved far away to the Highlands, near the frontier. He also told him several very funny stories at Hansei's expense, and especially about the wager for six measures of wine.

Sixtus informed his comrade that Walpurga was no longer a favorite at court, and that it would soon be proven that she had been the mediator. Although he spoke in an undertone, Baum heard every word. After Sixtus had made this disclosure to Kumpan, he felt sorry for what he had done, but it was just because they had so few subjects in common, that he had told him the very matters he desired to keep from him. All that remained was to make his friend promise not to mention a word of the affair, and Kumpan always was a man of his word.

After Kumpan had left, Baum went up to Sixtus again and told him that he thought it would be well to go to Walpurga, as she might know something of the affair; but Sixtus replied that the

journey would be a useless one, and that Baum was to remain with him.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the following morning, Bruno would have liked to return. What was the use of it all? Was he to act the fable of the little brother and sister over again, and to be the little brother who had gone in search of his sister? And what would be the result? A dreadful, agitating sight—one which he could never banish from his memory. It would haunt him in his dreams—a bloated, disfigured corpse with open mouth.

Bruno cast an injured look upon the friend who congratulated him on having slept so well, and on having thus gained new strength for the trials the day might have in store for him. Bruno looked at the intendant with feelings of anger and distrust. He felt almost certain that this man regarded the whole occurrence as a tragic drama, which would have to be mounted for the stage. It was evident to him that the intendant was using this as a study, of which he would avail himself in future scenic representations, and that he was observing his every gesture and feature, so that he might be able to instruct the actors under him; so that he might say: "Thus does one pose himself, and thus does one groan when he finds his sister's corpse—Am I to be this puppet's puppet? No, never!"

Bruno would have liked, best of all, to have journeyed back to his mother-in-law, even if he had to succumb to her. He could convert his humility into gallantry, and, at all events, would be spared these terrible sights. But here was his friend encouraging him to neglect nothing which fraternal duty demanded of him. Oh! these people of feeling are the most abominable of mortals, for they take everything so seriously. Do they really mean all they say? Who knows? Every one in the world is merely playing a part, after all.

He must go on, and he saw what was in store for him. This terrible friend with the strong sense of duty—and, after all, he was not his friend—this man, whom he had inflicted on himself, would force him to spend days, searching for horrors which he had no desire to find. They drove on, in an ill-humor.

The intendant, finding that Bruno would formally thank him for every little service, declared:

"I beg of you, do n't thank me. I am only doing my duty to my friend and to myself. You know that I once loved your sister, and that she rejected my suit."

He was discreet enough to refrain from adding that he had afterward rejected her offer, and Bruno groaned inwardly at his cruel discretion.

The intendant found Bruno quiet and reserved. Concluding that this was the natural reaction from the excitement of the previous day, he, too, remained silent. Bruno often looked at the intendant, as if he were a gaoler leading him to the place of punishment.

They drove on rapidly. At the different post-houses, where they stopped to change horses, the intendant would fluently converse with the postilions and the innkeepers in their native dialect. Several of them knew him.

To his great alarm, it suddenly occurred to Bruno that he had the saloon warbler with him. He was perfectly at home here, and would now have a chance to display the treasures of his dialect wardrobe, to pursue his studies, and revel in the pleasure which the rude dialect of the region afforded him.

His friend, for this was the only term by which he dared characterize him, was now in his element, and found it no easy matter to refrain from expressing his delight thereat.

At length they reached the last mountain and saw, from afar, the mirror-like surface of the lake, surrounded by gigantic mountains and sparkling in the golden sunshine.

"Do you see that maple tree, over there?" said the intendant, no longer able to contain himself, "there to the left, by the small rock—that is the point from which I sketched the painting that hangs in her majesty's music-room."

The friend had imagined that this remark might help to create a calmer mood in Bruno, so that the terrible idea of his sister's having sought her death below that very spot, might not at once obtrude itself.

Bruno looked at him with an impatient air. Every one thinks of himself, said an inner voice, and this coxcomb is now thinking of his daubs. He remained silent, however, for silence was more expressive of grief than words could be. He rubbed his eyes, for the dazzling reflection of the sun's rays on the surface of the lake had made them ache. His friend grasped his hand and silently pressed it. He had understood this fraternal heart, and his glance meant: others may think you superficial and frivolous, but I know you better.

From the landing near by, they could hear the neighing of Bruno's horses, which were there in charge of his grooms. And now, for the first time, Bruno felt a sense of shame in the presence of his servants. They, of course, knew everything, and how they must have talked about it in the tap-room. He was full of anger at the sister who had inflicted all this upon him.

The first information they received at the inn was that old Zenza had been there. She had endeavored to sell or to pawn the ring which the maid of honor had given her on the night before she had drowned herself. As they all regarded the ring as stolen, she

could obtain nothing for it. It was now decided that Zenza must know more. They took a guide and walked along the mountain path that led towards her hut.

Bruno, being a huntsman, was usually a good climber, but to-day he felt as if he would break down at every step, and was often obliged to stop and rest.

His friend encouraged him and they walked on through the sunny forest, where the light shone brightly on the soft moss, while many a hawk uttered its shrill cry overhead.

At the crossing of the roads, they encountered a party of ladies and gentlemen; they were in city dress and had adorned their hats with green branches and garlands. Bruno hurriedly stepped aside from the path. The intendant, however, was recognized by a former colleague of his, and Bruno heard him say that the guests of a little watering place in the neighborhood were making an excursion to see the place where Countess Wildenort had drowned herself. The party passed on and their loud and cheerful talk was heard from afar.

At last they reached the hut. It was closed. They knocked at the door. A growl was the only answer they received, and the next moment they heard some one dashing a bolt back.

A neglected looking, yet powerful man, with a wild, dishevelled appearance, stood before them.

Thomas recognized Bruno at once and exclaimed:

"Ah, Wildenort! it's well you've come. I take my hat off to you, for you're an out-and-out man. What matters one's father! When he's dying, ride off; one can't help him die, you know. Ho, ho! you're a splendid fellow. No one cares for the old lumber any more."

"What do you want of me?" asked Bruno, with tremulous voice.

"I shan't harm you; there's my hand on it. I'll do you no harm. You let the king do what he chooses and make no fuss about it, and so I shall do you no harm, for what you've done in the same line of business. You're my king. I got it out of her at the very last, that you were the one, and that, because it was you, she had helped your sister. You know what I mean, well enough. I shan't say a word. The stupid world need n't know what there is between us. Sister, king; poacher, count—it's all as it should be."

"This man seems crazed," said the intendant to the guide. "What do you want? Let go of the gentleman!" he called out to Thomas.

"Is that your lackey? Where's the one with the coal black hair?—Let us alone," said Thomas, turning to the intendant, "we understand each other very well. Do n't we, brother? You're a brother, and I'm one, too. Ha! the world's wisely arranged!

You must n't think I've been drinking; I've taken something, it's true, but that does n't hurt me—I'm as sober as a judge. Now let me tell you what my plan is: I'll listen to reason, to anything that's fair and just; I can see that you're a decent fellow, for you come to me of your own accord."

"We wish to enquire whether you know anything of the lady in the blue riding-habit who was here?" said the intendant in the proper dialect.

"Ho, ho!" cried Thomas, "how finely he talks; but I can understand priest German, and judge's German, too. I've had enough to do with those people already. But you'd better not interfere;" and then, turning to Bruno, he added: "Let us two talk together, alone. Now listen, brother; this is what we'll do: You need n't make a count of me; all you need do is to give me servants and horses, and enough money and chamois and deer, and you'll soon see how clever and strong and hearty I am. Would you like to wrestle with me? or come out into the woods, and I'll show you that I can shoot better than you can. Now, all you need do is to give me either your sister's inheritance or my sister's, and you'll see we'll be a couple of merry brothers!"

Bruno hardly knew whether he was dreaming or awake. Some of the insolent fellow's words were clear enough to him, others he could not understand. He motioned the intendant to withdraw, and then said in a gentle voice:

"Thomas, I know you now; sit down."

Thomas seated himself on the bench, and, raising the brandy jug which he had bought with the money received for the hat, said:

"Won't you drink something?"

Bruno declining, Thomas took a long draught.

The intendant said to Bruno, in French, that there was no information to be obtained from that quarter, and that he had secretly charged the guide to hold fast to the wild fellow so that, unmolested, they might return to the valley.

"What sort of gibberish is the simpleton talking, there?" cried Thomas, preparing to rush at the intendant. At the same moment, the guide threw himself on Thomas, and held him fast, while the two gentlemen left the hut and hurried down the mountain.

It was not until the guide again came up with them, that they paused and Bruno ventured to draw a long breath. The guide now told them how Thomas had raged, and how he had called out for the gun which he had hidden in the wood, and that he had said he must shoot his brother-in-law.

"The best thing the fellow could do," said the guide, "would be to drink himself to death, so as to save himself from being hanged."

After some time, Bruno ventured to ask the intendant, in a whisper, whether they had not proceeded far enough with their investigation, and whether it was not best to return at once.

The intendant was silent. Bruno looked at him again with that bitter expression which might also pass for grief.

The intendant, who saw that Bruno was almost broken down, consented to return.

CHAPTER XII.

THE two friends returned to the inn. On their way, they met one of the grooms who had brought their horses, and who now told them of a boatman who had informed him that the body of a woman had been dragged from the lake. It had been near the village, of which a few scattered houses and the church steeple were visible on the opposite shore.

The intendant embraced Bruno, who seemed staggered at the news. They sat down for awhile, in the very spot where they had been when the news reached them. The groom said that, by boat, they could reach the village in one hour; but that if they went by land, it would take them several hours.

"I can't cross the water," said Bruno, "I can't to-day; Schoning, do n't ask it of me! Do n't force me! Why do you torment me so?" he asked, impatiently.

The intendant well knew that deep grief makes men unreasonable. In the dark depths of their hearts, there still lurks a feeling of anger, even towards those who most thoroughly sympathize with them, but who, themselves, have been spared by misfortune.

"I take no offense at anything you do," he replied, "and though you treat me rudely, I shall bear it. I understand you, and am far from wishing to induce you to cross the lake. We'll ride."

Their horses were brought, and they rode off in the direction of the village that had been pointed out to them. They passed an inn where a crowd of merry wagoners, boatmen and woodcutters were sitting under the lindens, and drinking beer or brandy. Bruno felt that he was being treated like a fever patient whom they were dragging over hill and dale, and to whose clouded vision the world seemed bare and desolate. When they reached the inn, his mouth watered. He thirsted for drink; perhaps it might give him new strength and, what was still better, might enable him to forget. But he did not venture to express his wish to his friend. Was it proper for one in his position to drink brandy? A poacher, like Thomas, might do so; but it would ill befit a cavalier. While thanking the intendant for the trouble he had given him, and promising that he would never forget it, Bruno, whose tongue was parched with thirst, secretly cursed the friend who would not allow him to drink. Ah, how fortunate it is that words are always at command. It is almost as fortunate as the fact that horses are properly broken in, and keep up their pace so nicely that they give one no trouble.

The friends rode on at a rapid pace. It was high noon when they reached the village which Hansei and his family had left two days before. The landlord of the Chamois was standing at the door, and respectfully saluted the two horsemen with the groom behind them.

They alighted. Bruno handed the reins of his steaming horse to the groom. The intendant led his friend into the front garden, where they sat down. He then insisted on Bruno's taking a glass of wine. The host quickly brought a sealed bottle, and vaunted it as the best wine in the house. He also brought some roast meat and placed it on the table, and, as long as he had brought it, it must be paid for, even though it were not touched.

The intendant took the host aside and, in a whisper, asked him whether it was true that the body of a woman had been cast ashore near there.

The host answered in the affirmative, and with a smile of satisfaction. The occurrence was a strange and unusual one, and it was only right that it should enure to his great profit. The intendant again asked him where the house was in which the body lay.

"I'll take you there," said the host, with a smile.

"Send for the burgomaster, also."

"There 's no need of that; I'm a member of the council," said he, hurrying into the house and returning with his long coat and his medal. He meant to let the gentlemen see with whom they had to do. He felt sure that they must be people of quality, or else they would n't be traveling with a groom, and would have said: "Take your meat away; we shan't pay for it!" He even fancied that he knew one of them.

"Begging your pardon," said he to the intendant, "but some years ago, there was a painter here who looked enough like you to be your brother."

The intendant well knew that it was himself who was referred to, but he was not yet in the mood to renew the acquaintance.

The host accompanied the strangers to Hansei's house.

On the way there, he said: "She was a handsome creature. She was beautiful; but good-for-nothing; and her belongings were as bad as she was; particularly her one brother."

The intendant beckoned the innkeeper to be quiet. Bruno bit his lips until they bled. They found it almost impossible to force their way through the crowd which had gathered in the garden and about the road. There were wailing woman, crying children, and cursing men.

"Make way there!" cried he host. He walked on forcing a passage for the two men, and Bruno heard some one behind him say: "The handsome man, with the large moustache, is the king."

"No he is n't; it 's his cousin!" said another.

They had entered the garden. Bruno leaned against the cherry tree, and the intendant motioned to the host to allow his comrade to rest for a little while. Everything seemed to swim before Bruno's eyes. Something touched him, and he started with fear. It was a dead leaf which had fallen from the tree above. At last, addressing Schoning in French, he said:

"What good will it do the dead, if I look at her? And it will harm me forever, for I shall never be able to banish the sight from my memory!"

"You must go in, my friend. Remember that these people have made every effort in their power to restore to life one who was a stranger to them, and they have done this out of pure philanthropy."

"Well, we can give them money for that; but why torment ourselves with these dead remains?"

But Bruno was, nevertheless, obliged to go in; leaning on his friend's arm, he entered the house.

Black Esther now lay in the very spot where Hansei had been two days ago, when thinking of her. Her thick, glossy black hair had fallen over her face; her mouth was open—the last cry that Irma had heard still rested there.

"Esther!" cried Bruno, covering his face with his hands.

"It is n't your sister!" said the intendant consolingly. "Come, let us be off."

Bruno could not move from the spot.

"Yes! sister!" cried the old woman, who now rose up from beside the corpse; "yes, sister. Did n't I tell you to let her alone, even if she did help the beautiful lady? Did n't I tell you she'd kill herself, if you beat her again? And now you've had your own way, and here she is, lying in this house! Oh, this house, this house! The lake will wash it away yet. Lake! take the whole house! Who are you? What do you want?" she cried, springing up and seizing Bruno's arm. "Who are you with the black hands? let me see who you are—it's you, is it? you who did n't want to see your father die—and what do you want of my Esther? Great God!—now I see it all. You were the one, you! say you were!—say it—! Do n't shut your eyes, or I'll scratch them out for all. It was you—I'll drive a nail into your brain, into the cursed brain that forgot her! Oh, why did n't I know it before! But there's time enough yet. My Thomas has already aimed at you—and he'll have a chance again—"

Bruno fainted. The intendant caught him in his arms, but could not support his weight and, therefore, laid him down on the same floor on which lay the dead body of Esther. The innkeeper hurried out to fetch water, and when they opened the door, several people entered from without, among them Doctor Sixtus, Doctor Kumpan, the notary, and Baum.

Sixtus soon restored Bruno to consciousness. A glance sufficed to inform Baum of what had happened. He supported himself against a door post, holding fast with desperate grip, lest he should fall to the ground. At the first opportunity, he glided out of the room. He was not needed there, and if he were now to betray himself, all might be lost. He dragged himself as far as the cherry tree, sat down on the bench, buttoned his gaiters, unbuttoned them, took out his watch, counted the seconds, wound it up again, held it to his ear and carelessly played with the watch chain. He stopped to consider. One great task still remains, thought he to himself, and that I must accomplish unaided. He felt that he had a clue to Irma's whereabouts. Sixtus would n't listen to such a thing and ridiculed him. So much the better; the credit would all fall to his share; and for that reason, this was no time to worry about his mother. His sister was dead, and perhaps it was for the best. At any rate, he could n't restore her to life; but, at some future day, he could, without discovering himself, provide for the old woman.

Baum felt proud of his firmness, and stroked his chin with satisfaction.

Within the house, the excitement was not yet at an end. The old woman howled, shrieked, ran about the room, opened the window, and cried: "Strike him dead! Drown him, he drowned her!"

Baum let his watch drop from his hand when he heard these words. The old woman was dragged away from the window, and Doctor Kumpan held her fast. She went back to the corpse.

"Strike us all dead!" she cried, "there's no king on earth, and no God in Heaven!"

The old woman raved; then she would weep, and then would again go back to her child.

"Your lips are open! Say but a word! only one 'yes,' before these witnesses! speak his name! he ruined you and left you to perish in misery! They do n't believe me. Say, you!" she exclaimed, addressing the intendant and seizing him at the same time, "say, did n't he utter her name and confess it all? Is nothing to be done to one who leads a poor creature into misery and drives her to death? Speak!" said she turning to Bruno. "Here! take the ring your sister gave me! I want nothing from any of you!"

Shrieking and groaning, she again threw herself upon the corpse. Bruno was at last led away. He was as pale as death; his face had been marked by his black gloves. They placed him upon the seat under the cherry tree. Baum rose and brought some water, so that Bruno might wash his face. He was astonished when he saw the white handkerchief which had been blackened by the spots upon his face.

They went back to the inn. Like a fearful child, Bruno never relaxed his hold of the intendant's hand. At every sound he heard, he fancied that the old woman was coming to scratch out his eyes and to tear out his heart. At last he regained his composure and asked the intendant what he had said on seeing the corpse. Schoning replied that he had called out "*Schwester*" (sister), and that the old woman, who had understood him to say *Esther*, had grown quite frantic in consequence.

Bruno felt comforted to learn that he had not betrayed himself. He, nevertheless, set aside a considerable sum for the lifelong support of the old woman from whom *Irma* had received her last shelter.

"Oh, my friend!" said he to the intendant, "as long as I live, I shall never forget the image of that drowned girl!"

Bruno was so exhausted that he was unable to ride his horse. Doctor *Sixtus*'s carriage was in readiness and he got into it, in order to accompany him back to the capital. The doctor gave Bruno the poor consolation that *Irma*'s body would not be recovered. That of the abandoned girl had floated on the surface. *Irma*, however—as he had already said,—must have been kept down by her long riding-habit, and would, therefore, never be found.

When taking leave of Bruno, the intendant said:

"Now I know how great a heart you have."

Bruno merely nodded in reply. He did not object. It might be well if the intendant were to say the same thing at court.

When they repaired to the carriage, the whole region was obscured by a misty rain; neither mountain nor lake were distinguishable. Just as they were starting, Bruno called *Baum* to him and gave him his coat with a red collar, for *Baum* was to mount Bruno's horse and ride it home. The intendant rode back, accompanied by *Baum*. He told the lackey to remain beside him, instead of following.

"These are fearful goings on," said *Baum*, addressing the intendant.

"Yes, terrible. I think the mother of the drowned girl must be crazed."

"Sir," resumed *Baum*, "there is something I should like to speak to you about. I think that may be the Countess is n't drowned, after all. The court physician has laughed at me, but I have a clue, and—"

The report of a gun was heard. *Baum* fell from his horse.

"I've hit you this time!" cried a voice.

Thomas rushed forth from the thicket.

"Take me!" cried he, "I caught him after—"

At that moment, he saw *Baum*'s body lying on the ground. In a furious voice, he cried:

"I meant to shoot Bruno, and now it's you! you!"

"Brother! my brother!" gasped Baum. "I'm Wolfgang! Your brother Janger—Wolfgang—Zenza—my mother—!"

Thomas rushed back into the thicket and, in an instant, the report of another shot was heard.

The intendant was in despair. The rain fell in torrents. Baum gave one more convulsive start. Presently, a merry crowd passed by; it was the excursion party they had met early that morning. The ladies were horror-struck and hastened away; the gentlemen remained to assist the intendant. Peasants were called from the fields to carry Baum's body back to the village; others searched the thicket, and soon brought out the lifeless body of Thomas.

The intendant met the notary in the village, and gave him a full report of all that had happened. Before long, the whole village had gathered at the Chamois. It was no unimportant event, for three of one family to be dead at once. No one would confess to surprise that Baum had turned out to be Wolfgang. They all declared that they had recognized him long ago, even when he had come with Doctor Sixtus to take Walpurga away.

The intendant and the innkeeper sat up late that night. The former had discovered himself as the painter who had been a guest at the inn in times gone by. The host had much to tell about Hansei and Walpurga, and one can readily conceive the tone in which he spoke of them.

When they told Zenza what had happened, she listened with a stolid, stupefied air; nor did she seem to understand them when they told her that the Count had left money for her and had promised always to take care of her. She burst into a shrill laugh, and when food was brought, greedily ate all that was placed before her.

Baum, Thomas, and Black Esther were buried in one grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE king was at the hunt. The queen was ill. Life at court went on as usual. The ladies and gentlemen dined at the marshal's table, and conversed upon different subjects. They were cheerful, for it was their duty to maintain the accustomed tone.

It was the fourth day after the receipt of the terrible news. It was after dinner, and the ladies were sitting under the so-called "mushroom," a round, vine-covered arbor, situated at the edge of the mountain vineyards. The roof rested, at the centre, on a column and, in the distance, resembled an open umbrella, or a gigantic mushroom. They were delighted to have a chance to talk of the preparations for the betrothal of Princess Angelica. They spoke in praise of her noble traits, although she was merely a simple, modest, good-hearted girl. They had the court catechism, the genealogical calendar, before them; for dispute had arisen as

to the degree in which the mediatized Prince Arnold was related, on his grandmother's side, to the reigning house. Their conversation, however, was simply a makeshift.

Some one remarked that the intendant had returned from his journey. No one, however, knew what adventures he had passed through. They all knew that there had been deaths by shooting and drowning, but as to the "who" and the "how," they were as yet ignorant.

They felt quite happy when they saw the intendant coming in person. They welcomed him in a half-pitying, half-teasing tone. He seemed quite exhausted by his recent experiences. They offered him the most comfortable chair and, placing it in the centre of the group, begged him to tell them everything. Although this general homage was not without a touch of irony, the intendant felt quite flattered by it, and was, as usual, ready to play the agreeable. He was always willing to sacrifice everything, not excepting himself, for the sake of being in favor.

He began by telling them of Bruno's deep grief; but that did not interest them. Very well—"as you do n't care to hear of Bruno, we'll pass him by." He then went on to give a cleverly arranged account of the terrible death of Baum who, like a true servant, had been obliged to give up his life for another. However, the death had not been an undeserved one, for he had denied his mother and kindred, and, at last, fell by the hand of his own brother, who immediately afterward killed himself.

The intendant's audience were horror-struck, and found it wondrous strange that so much of the adventurous was concealed in a common-place, every-day lackey, like Baum.

"You have at last beheld a tragedy in real life," said one of the ladies.

The intendant well knew that tragedies were no longer in favor, and, in his anxiety to please, recounted some very interesting reports about Walpurga, giving, as his authority, the host of the Chamois, an honest, upright man, who had been decorated for his services in the wars. Whether it was real or affected forgetfulness on their part, it is impossible to say,—but the ladies seemed to have forgotten that Walpurga had ever existed—but who can remember all one's subordinates?

For want of some other safe topic of conversation, they listened to various droll stories about Walpurga and her dolt of a husband. Schoning, to use his own words, simply repeated all that the voracious and upright host of the Chamois had told him. Hansei was described as an awkward bumpkin, unable to use his hands or feet, and obliged to call the schoolmaster to his assistance whenever he found it necessary to count the smallest sum of money. One of these stories, introducing a wager and a chamber window, was quite piquant and greatly to the taste of the ladies. They

tittered, and scolded the intendant for talking of such things, but Schoning well knew that the more they scolded, the better they were pleased with what he had told them. He found an added pleasure in the opportunity afforded him of using the dialect of the mountain region from which he had but recently returned, and cleverly imitated the voices of the peasants and peasant women who had stood before the window, on the night referred to. He introduced various forcible and unequivocal expressions, and greatly enjoyed shocking the ladies, who would, now and then, cry: "Oh, you horrid man! you terrible man!" One lady actually pricked him with her needle, but he quietly proceeded with his story, well knowing how delighted they were to listen to it.

And if there was no harm in describing Hansei as a dolt, there was just as little in heightening the colors in which Walpurga was depicted—the petticoats of the peasant women are always shorter upon the stage than they are in real life—and thus, with the kindest feeling towards all and merely yielding to his desire to please, the intendant said all sorts of strange things about Walpurga. It had been rumored, he added, that it was not without cause that the pastor had called her into the vestry-room on the first Sunday after her return.

With cautious reserve, he at last confided to them, as a great secret, the story that Walpurga had received immense sums of money from a certain lady who had been a friend of hers. It was, of course, impossible to assign a reason for such gifts, but it was well known that the money had been used to purchase a large farm. They had, indeed, been obliged to remove from their old home; for, even in the country, ill-gotten wealth disgraces its possessors. It had been the talk of the whole neighborhood. The bailiff had also confirmed the report that the whole purchase had been paid for in ready money, and that the price had been more than six times as much as Walpurga had received for her services as nurse.

The intendant again remarked that he did not mean to calumniate any one,—that really nothing was further from his intentions;—but he was determined to be interesting, even though it was at the expense of others, as well as himself.

They were delighted to know that this dressed-up specimen of rural innocence was at last exposed, and only hoped that the queen might also behold her favorite in her true colors.

Care was taken that she should not be left in ignorance of the story.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE king was hunting in the Highlands. He was a veritable sportsman, and, instead of allowing his retainers to beat up

the game and drive it within shooting distance, would climb the dizziest heights while in quest of the chamois. His hardened and elastic frame enabled him to sustain any amount of fatigue or exposure, and gained sinewy strength and new ardor from the chase.

The gentlemen of the party felt sure that some important matter engaged the king's mind, and were not a little puzzled how to account for Bronnen's constant and almost exclusive attendance upon the king.

It was well known that Bronnen had declined to take charge of the war office under the Schnabelsdorf ministry, and now it was asserted that Schnabelsdorf was at a disadvantage; for he was only master of the green table and was unable to attend the hunt. Bronnen thus had the king's ear for several days.

Rifles were heard on the heights, and many a beast was killed; rifles were heard in the valley, and two brothers met their death. In the meanwhile, the capital was filled with murmurs that sounded like the roar of mighty ocean. The queen heard nothing of all this. In her apartments, all was quiet; not a footfall was heard, naught but occasional faint whisperings.

The queen had felt outraged by the manner in which the newspaper she had read, referred to Eberhard's death; and yet the article had been mild and reserved when compared with the utterances of the people.

They reported affairs at court as in a terrible state; it was even said that the queen had lost her reason when she heard the news of Countess Wildenort's death.

People little knew how much of truth lay in this rumor. The night that Irma had spent wandering over hill and dale, was not half so terrible as the thoughts that filled the queen's mind.

She hated and abhorred Irma, and yet envied her her death. A queen dare not commit suicide, for that were without precedent. A queen must patiently submit, while they slowly kill her according to the forms of etiquette—must suffer herself, as it were, to be embalmed while yet alive. And, even then, they do not bury her. No—they simply deposit her in a vault; dignity must not be sacrificed, and, above all, there must be no queenly suicide. They offered to bring her child; but she refused to see it, for Irma had kissed it. She would rub her cheeks again and again; they were impure, they burned,—for Irma had kissed them.

Love, friendship, faith, fidelity, nature, painting, music, eloquence—all were dead to her, for Irma had possessed them all, and now all was a lie and a caricature.

The queen started from her seat with a shudder. She had been thinking of the king, and felt sure that his remorse must goad him to self-destruction. He could not support the thought that she whom he had ruined had still enough of courage and righteousness left to give up her life. How could he live after that? How could he aim his gun at an innocent beast, instead of at himself?

He whose name is on the lips of multitudes to whom he owes duties, may not lay hands upon himself. But what right had he to indulge in conduct which must drag him down from his exalted position? To whom could he look for truth, when he himself—?

The queen's thoughts almost drove her mad.

People said that the queen was crazed—it seemed as if a vague feeling had informed them of the yawning abyss that opened before her.

She gave orders that no one should be admitted. She smiled at the thought that she could still command, and that there were still some left to obey her. After some time, she sent for Doctor Gunther. He appeared at once, for he had been waiting in the ante-room.

The queen found it a great relief to confide to him the thoughts that so bewildered and confused her, but she could not force herself to say that she still felt how the king loved her—that is, as far as his wavering, restless nature would permit the existence of what might be termed love. She confessed everything to Gunther, except that—she felt ashamed that she could still associate the thought of love with that of the king.

"Ah, my friend!" said she, at last, in a sad tone, "is there no chloroform for the soul, or for a part of it?—a few drops of Lethe? Teach me to forget things, to blunt my sensibility; my thoughts will kill me."

According to his usual practice, Gunther thought it best to produce an entire change of tone, instead of attempting to patch and mend the constitution at every fresh attack. He felt that, as soon as the queen had learned to think and feel differently, his path would be clear. Instead of offering to console her, he simply aided her in developing her thoughts, while he revealed to her the causes that underlie all human action. He treated the subject according to the great maxim of the solitary philosopher who claimed that all human actions are directed by the laws of nature. With those who have attained to a proper conception and understanding of these laws, the idea of forgiveness is out of the question. It may, indeed, be regarded as included in the admission of necessity.

It was thus that Gunther endeavored, as it were, to clear away the rubbish and the smoking ruins that were left after a fire. The fitful flames would, however, still burst forth, here and there.

The queen complained that all seemed chaos to her, and even went so far as to declare the desire to be virtuous as mere folly. The only comfort that Gunther offered her, was that he also knew the utter wretchedness of despair. He was not as one who, feeling himself secure from danger, calls out to him who wrestles with the agony of death: "Come to me: it is pleasant to be here." He was a companion of misery. He told her that there had been a period when he had not only despaired of his heart, and believed

neither in cures nor in health, but had even lost all faith in the wisdom that rules the universe.

He acted on the principle that the only way to treat the despondent, is to show them that others have suffered and yet have learned to live.

When the consciousness of this truth has dawned upon the afflicted, there is new light, and he enters upon the first stage of deliverance.

"I will impart the saddest confession of my life to you," said Gunther.

"You?"

"There was a time when I envied the frivolous, and even the vicious, their light-heartedness. I desired to be like them. Why burden one's soul with moral considerations, when one may live so pleasantly while seizing the joys the world affords us?"

Gunther paused, and the queen looked up at him in astonishment. He continued, calmly:

"I have saved myself, and my rich experience has convinced me that every one of us, even though he strive for excellence, has, so to say, a skeleton closet somewhere in his soul. There must have been a time, if only a moment, when his thoughts were impure or when he was on the point of committing a sin."

As if reflecting on what he had said, the queen was silent for a long while, and at last said:

"Tell me; are there any happy beings in this world?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean, are there beings in whom inclination and destiny are in accord, and who are, at the same time, conscious of this harmony?"

"I thank you! I see that you are endeavoring to express yourself with precision. Your Majesty knows that, to a certain extent, I judge persons by their mode of forming sentences. It is not so important to display what is called cleverness, as to be clear and concise in what one has to say."

The queen observed that her friend endeavored to lead her to take a larger view of affairs, and to assist her in acquiring self-command; and, with a sad smile, she asked:

"And do you know the answer to my question?"

"I think I do; Your Majesty knows the story of the shirt of the happy one?"

"I do not quite remember it."

"Well then, to tell it in as few words as possible: A certain king was ill, and it was said that he could not recover until the shirt of a happy man was procured for him. They searched and searched, and at last found a man who was unspeakably happy, and—he had no shirt to his back. I change the story according to my own conviction. Were I a poet, I would, in fancy, wander

from house to house, from town to town, from country to country, describe the life of men in various conditions, and point out that, with all their complaining, they were, nevertheless, happy, or, at all events, as happy as they could be. Every human being is endowed with a certain capacity for happiness, the measure of which is regulated by his nature. It is this which determines how high or how deep, his joys or misfortunes; how blunt or how keen, his sensibility. The measure of happiness assigned to every human being corresponds to the requirements of his nature. Unhappiness is necessary in order that we may appreciate happiness, just as we need shadows to help us distinguish the light."

"And so you think that all people are happy?"

"They are so in truth, but not in reality. The reason is, they are not in accord with the requirements of their nature, and are ever seeking for happiness in that which they have not, or rather that which they are not."

"I do not quite comprehend that, but will endeavor to do so," replied the queen; "but, tell me, can he who is conscious of guilt also be happy?"

"Yes, if he acts freely, and if the knowledge of his guilt makes him more forgiving and more active in good works. Errors, irregularities, or what are termed faults, are the result of excessive or defective endowment, and may, to a certain extent, be described as the *basso rilievo* or *alto rilievo* of character. Faults of excess may be remedied by education and knowledge, but not those of deficiency. Most of us, however, require those who belong to us, and all whom we wish to be noble and great, to fill up the defects of their nature; and that is simply requiring the impossible."

The queen was silent for some time. She was evidently making the Doctor's thoughts her own.

"I, too, have a bas-relief fault," said she, at last. "My desire to forsake the religion of my fathers and to embrace a strange faith subjected me to deceit and estrangement, and I regard this as a punishment visited upon me by God or nature. It was this that made the king look upon me as weak and vacillating and impelled him to leave me. I was the first to think of defection, and defection at last became my punishment!"

The queen wept while uttering these words, and her tears were in pity for herself.

Gunther remained calm and quiet.

The queen was on the threshold of the second stage of knowledge.

"The mere idea of renouncing your faith—and Your Majesty may remember that I never approved of it—" said Gunther, after a long pause, "only served to show that Your Majesty felt the need of possessing convictions which were not alone in accord with your nature, but were also the outgrowth of it. Every clear

perception of truth, every conquest over pain, is a transformation, a remodeling of existence, or, as it is sometimes termed, a purification."

"I understand," replied the queen. "Oh, that I knew the system by which the world is governed, and the reasons that underlie human destiny! Why was I obliged to experience this? Has it made me any better? Will it inspire me to nobler actions? Would I not have been far better if my life had remained unclouded? I was full of love for all human beings. Ah, it was so delightful to know of no one on earth who was my enemy, and still more delightful to know no one whom I must hate and detest! And what am I to-day? I feel as if, where'er I turn, a corpse lies in my path. There is no free spot left me on earth! You are a wise man; help me to banish these terrible thoughts!"

"I am not wise; and, if I were, I could not bestow my wisdom upon you. It was a saying of the ancients, that others can show you the apples of the Hesperides, but cannot gather them for you."

"Well, well! be it so. But tell me, would it not be better to grow greater and nobler and stronger in virtue, and in our faith in humanity?"

"Childlike innocence is happiness, but a clear perception of truth is a great gain and, according to my opinion, a necessary and enduring joy—"

"You avoid my question. It seems to me that you, too, are without the key."

"I do not possess it—Life is inexorable. All that we can do is to bend to the descending storm, and yet remain steadfast. Sunshine will come again. We are subject to the lesser law of our own nature, and the greater law that embraces the universe. There is not a star that completes its course without deviation. Surrounding planets attract or repel it; but yet it moves on, in its appointed course, teaching mankind the lesson of perseverance."

"You offer remedies, and yet place your trust in the healing powers of nature?"

"Certainly," replied Gunther, "nature alone can help us."

After awhile, he added:

"To one who is bowed down by grief, it were useless to suggest refreshing wanderings on the heights. With returning strength, the desire will return; for the will is merely the outward manifestation of inner power. Now, while bending to the blow which has just descended upon you, you are clothed and sustained by the life-giving power of nature. It is this that sustains existence until we again awaken to life and free action. My good mother, in her devout manner, used to say: 'May God help us, until we can help ourselves.'"

"I thank you!" said the queen. "I thank you," she repeated, and closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the same morning on which the king and Bronnen were closeted together at the hunting-seat, the queen sent for Gunther. He found her clad in white and resting on her couch. She looked pale and feeble, and told him how provoked she felt at the vanity and conceit which had induced her, a young queen, to regard herself as wise and good, and had led her to imagine herself as gifted with unusual endowments.

"Did you know of what was going on here?" she asked the physician.

"No; I would not have believed it possible, and it is only now that I understand the terrible death of my dear friend Eberhard. A father in such grief—"

The queen did not enter into this view of the matter and went on, as if speaking to herself:

"When I recall the days, the hours, in which she sung, I must ask myself, can it be possible to sing such songs and such words,—breathing naught but love, kindness, exaltation, purity—and at the same time have nothing in one's soul? Aye, worse than nothing—falseness and hypocrisy? Every word seems false. Have we a right to be princes, to regard ourselves as superior to others and entitled to rule them, if we do not elevate ourselves above them by purity and greatness of soul? I have become a changed being since yesterday. My soul then lay at the bottom of the sea, and the waves of death and despair raged above me; but now I wish to live. Only tell me how to endure it all. You've been at court so long and despise everything. Do n't shake your head; you despise it all—! Tell me, how is one to endure it? How can one manage to live on and yet remain here? You surely possess the mystery; impart it to me, for that alone can save me."

"Your Majesty," replied the physician, "you are still feverish and excited."

"Indeed, is that the sum of all your science? Princes are right when they abuse their fellow-creatures, for even the best of men are naught but polite shadows. I had placed all my dependence upon you; I had looked up to you as one exalted far above me; and where I had hoped to clasp a hand, you offer me an empty glove. You smile; I am not delirious, I've merely awakened to the truth; I have just passed through hours in which the beautiful world—Ah! how full of beauty it was—seemed filled with naught but creeping worms and loathsome corruption. Oh, it is terrible! I fancied there was one free being to whom I could tell all, and from whom I could ask everything in return; but you are not the man. Ah! there are no real men in this world. The best are nothing more than title-bearing creatures!"

"You shall not have goaded me in vain!" muttered Gunther half aloud, and rising from his seat.

"I did n't mean to offend you!" cried the queen. "Ah, thus it is; in pain and sorrow, we wound those who are nearest to us!"

"Calm yourself, Your Majesty," replied Gunther, seating himself. "If there is anything for which I may claim credit, it is that I do not indulge my sensitiveness. I am severe towards others, because I am severe towards myself."

The queen closed her eyes, but presently she looked at him intently and said:

"I fear nothing more."

Thus encouraged, Gunther went on to say:

"Human fancy cannot realize how much of vice and misery, nor, on the other hand, how much of beauty, holiness, grandeur and sublimity there is in life."

"Your Majesty, I am here at the palace, which is a world in miniature, a world in itself. All that is terrible, and all that is noble, is attracted hither—and yet, with every returning spring, the flowers bloom and the trees deck themselves in robes of green, while the stars shine over all. There is a blooming flower, a shining star even in the most despicable of beings. A drop descends from the clouds and falls upon the dusty road. The drop and the dust uniting, become the mire of the highway; but to the eye that looks deeper, the drop is still pure, although divided and subdivided until it is almost impalpably minute, and inseparable from the dust that darkens it. But even this image does not suffice. No image directed to the senses, can convey an adequate conception of the Deity. God exists even in the grain of dust. To our eyes, it is dust; but to the eye of God, it is as pure as the water and is equally the abode of infinity. The very people whom you regard as so false would like to be good, if it did not entail so much trouble and involve so many sacrifices. Most men would like to win virtue, but do not care to earn it. They all desire to draw the great prize in the lottery of morality. 'Oh, if I were only good!' said a lost creature to me, one day. Your Majesty, truth tells us that hatred and contempt are not good, for they injure the soul. The true art of living requires us to recognize that which is base in its true colors, but, at the same time, to avoid debasing ourselves by violent or passionate feelings against that which is wicked or vulgar. You must remove hatred from your heart, and be at peace with yourself. Hatred destroys the soul. You must grow to feel that, viewed in the proper light, vice and crime are simply defects. They may lead to a thousand sad consequences, but, of themselves, have no existence; virtue alone is a reality. Come up higher, unto where I stand, and you will find that you have been tormenting yourself with mere shadows."

"I see the steps," said the queen; "help me up!"

"Naught can avail but self-help. Each must learn to be monarch of himself, even though he wear a kingly crown. The law

teaches us that, in order to retain this command over ourselves, we must not permit anger and hatred to dwell in our souls, or to poison so much of the world as is given us to enjoy, be our share great or small."

"I had too much faith in virtue and kindness."

"Very likely. As long as one believes in mankind, there will be deception and despair. We persist in judging our fellow-creatures by what they are as regards us, instead of what they are as regards themselves. And thus, as long as we believe in human virtue, we may, at times, be perplexed at finding ourselves disappointed where we least expect it. As soon, however, as we recognize the Divine in everything, even though the possessor himself is unconscious of it, we have attained a lofty standpoint, from which we feel sure both of ourselves and of the world."

The queen hurriedly raised herself and, extending both hands to Gunther, exclaimed :

"You are a worker of miracles."

"No, I am not that. I am only a physician who has held many a hand hot with fever, or stiff in death, in his own. The healing art might serve as an illustration. We help all who need our help, and do not stop to ask who they are, whence they come, or whether, when restored to health, they persist in their evil courses. Our actions are incomplete, fragmentary; thought alone is complete and all-embracing. Our deeds and our selves are but fragments—the whole is God."

"I think I grasp your meaning. But our life, as you say, is indeed a mere fraction of life as a whole, and how is each one to bear up under the portion of suffering that falls to his individual lot? Can one—I mean it in its best sense—always be outside of one's self?"

"I am well aware, Your Majesty, that passions and emotions cannot be regulated by ideas; for they grow in a different soil, or, to express myself correctly, move in entirely different spheres. It is but a few days since I closed the eyes of my old friend Eberhard. Even he never fully succeeded in subordinating his temperament to his philosophy; but, in his dying hour, he rose beyond the terrible grief that broke his heart—grief for his child. He summoned the thoughts of better hours to his aid—hours when his perception of the truth had been undimmed by sorrow or passion—and he died a noble, peaceful death. Your Majesty must still live and labor, elevating yourself and others, at one and the same time. Permit me to remind you of the moment when, seated under the weeping ash, your heart was filled with pity for the poor child that, from the time it enters into the world, is doubly helpless. Do you still remember how you refused to rob it of its mother? I appeal to the pure and genuine impulse of that moment. You were noble and forgiving then, because you had not yet suffered.

You cast no stone at the fallen ; you loved and, therefore, you forgive."

"O God !" cried the queen, "and what has happened to me ? The woman on whose bosom my child rested is the most abandoned of creatures. I loved her, just as if she belonged to another world—a world of innocence. And now I am satisfied that she was the go-between and that her *naïveté* was a mere mask concealing an unparalleled hypocrite. I imagined that truth and purity still dwelt in the simple rustic world—but everything is perverted and corrupt. The world of simplicity is base ; aye, far worse than that of corruption !"

"I am not arguing about individuals. I think you mistaken in regard to Walpurga ; but, admitting that you are right, of this, at least, we can be sure : morality does not depend upon so-called education or ignorance, belief or unbelief. The heart and mind which have regained purity and steadfastness alone possess true knowledge. Extend your view beyond details and take in the whole—that alone can comfort and reconcile you."

"I see where you are, but I cannot get up there. I can't always be looking through your telescope that shows naught but blue sky. I am too weak. I know what you mean ; you say, in effect : 'Rise above these few people, above this span of space known as a kingdom—compared with the universe, they are but as so many blades of grass, or a mere clod of earth.'"

Gunther nodded a pleased assent, but the queen, in a sad voice, added :

"Yes, but this space and these people constitute my world. Is purity merely imaginary ? If it be not about us, where can it be found ?"

"Within ourselves," replied Gunther. "If it dwell within us, it is everywhere ; if not, it is nowhere. He who asks for more, has not yet passed the threshold. His heart is not yet what it should be. True love for the things of this earth, and for God, the final cause of all, does not ask for love in return. We love the divine spark that dwells in creatures themselves unconscious of it : creatures who are wretched, debased and, as the church has it, unredeemed. My master taught me that the purest joys arise from this love of God or of eternally pure nature. I made this truth my own, and you can and ought to do likewise. This park is yours ; but the birds that dwell in it, the air, the light, its beauty, are not yours alone, but are shared with you by all. So long as the world is ours, in the vulgar sense of the word, we may love it ; but when we have made it our own, in a purer and better sense, no one can take it from us. The great thing is to be strong and to know that hatred is death, that love alone is life, and that the amount of love that we possess is the measure of the life and the divinity that dwells within us."

Gunther rose and was about to withdraw. He feared lest excessive thought might over-agitate the queen who, however, motioned him to remain. He sat down again.

"You cannot imagine—" said the queen, after a long pause, "but that is one of the cant phrases that we have learned by heart. I mean just the reverse of what I have said. You can imagine the change that your words have effected in me."

"I can conceive it."

"Let me ask a few more questions. I believe—nay, I am sure—that on the height you occupy, and towards which you would fain lead me, there dwells eternal peace. But it seems so cold and lonely up there. I am oppressed with a sense of fear, just as if I were in a balloon ascending into a rarer atmosphere, while more and more ballast was ever being thrown out. I do n't know how to make my meaning clear to you. I do n't understand how to keep up affectionate relations with those about me, and yet regard them from a distance, as it were—looking upon their deeds as the mere action and reaction of natural forces. It seems to me as if, at that height, every sound and every image must vanish into thin air."

"Certainly, Your Majesty. There is a realm of thought in which hearing and sight do not exist, where there is pure thought and nothing more."

"But are not the thoughts that there abound projected from the realm of death into that of life, and is that any better than monastic self-mortification?"

"It is just the contrary. They praise death or, at all events, extol it, because, after it, life is to begin. I am not one of those who deny a future life. I only say, in the words of my master: 'Our knowledge is of life and not of death,' and where my knowledge ceases, my thoughts must cease. Our labors, our love, are all of this life. And because God is in this world and in all that exist in it, and only in those things, have we to liberate the divine essence, wherever it exists. The law of love should rule. What the law of nature is in regard to matter, the moral law is to man."

"I cannot reconcile myself to your dividing the divine power into millions of parts. When a stone is crushed, every fragment still remains a stone; but when a flower is torn to pieces, the parts are no longer flowers."

"Let us take your simile as an illustration, although in truth no example is adequate. The world, the firmament, the creatures that live on the face of the earth, are not divided—they are one; thought regards them as a whole. Take, for instance, the flower. The idea of divinity which it suggests to us, and the fragrance which ascends from it, are yet part and parcel of the flower: attributes without which it is impossible for us to conceive of its existence. The works of all poets, all thinkers, all heroes, may be

likened to streams of fragrance, wafted through time and space. It is in the flower that they live forever. Although the eternal spirit dwells in the cell of every tree or flower, and in every human heart, it is undivided and, in its unity, fills the world. He whose thoughts dwell in the infinite, regards the world as the mighty corolla from which the thought of God exhales."

For some time, the queen kept her face buried in her hands. Gunther quietly withdrew.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE king returned from the hunt. His courageous wanderings among the Highlands had reinvigorated him. He, too, was in a changed frame of mind.

He had already received a full account of what had happened at the lake. "That's over," thought he; "I can't always be dragging the past about with me."

He was informed that the queen had not left her apartments since the receipt of the dreadful news. He sent for Gunther, who informed him of the queen's condition, and recommended that she be treated with great indulgence.

The king fancied that the Doctor's manner was more reserved than usual. He would have liked to ask him as to the queen's thoughts, how she had received the sad news, and whether she had conquered her grief; but it was Gunther's duty to tell him all this, without waiting to be questioned. At last, the king asked him:

"Is the queen's mind composed?"

"It is noble and beautiful as ever," replied Gunther.

"Has she been reading of late? Did she send for the court chaplain?"

"Not to my knowledge, Your Majesty."

The king who, at other times, found the observance of etiquette so convenient, now found it irksome.

He would have liked the Doctor to speak of his own accord, and explain much that was yet unclear, instead of simply answering the questions put to him.

"You have had a great trial; in Count Eberhard, you lost an old friend."

"He lives in my memory, just as he did before he died," replied Gunther.

The king's heart was filled with anger. He had been very friendly in his advances towards this man, had even enquired after an event in his private life, and yet Gunther, while preserving perfect decorum, remained as reserved and as repelling as ever.

His old aversion towards this man, who, in the midst of the excitement at court, always remained unmoved, was again aroused.

He dismissed Gunther, with a gracious wave of his hand; but when he had gone, his eye followed him with a sinister expression.

A thought occurred to him which made his cheeks glow, and determined him upon another line of action. It was now clear to him that the real cause of his misstep lay in the fact that a third person had stood between him and his wife. This should no longer be the case, no matter how well it was meant. Instead of asking Gunther for information as to his wife's thoughts and feelings, she should tell him all, in person and alone. He felt a deep affection for her, and thought that, since he had conquered so much within himself, he was again worthy of her.

The king sent for Countess Brinkenstein. Since the sad occurrence, the king had only moved among men, by whom affairs of this nature are treated more lightly and, in fact, are scarcely alluded to. And now, for the first time, he stood face to face with a woman; one indeed in whom a noble mind was combined with the most orthodox observance of court etiquette. The king's demeanor was dignified, although his heart trembled with emotion.

"We have had sad experiences," said he to her.

With great tact, Countess Brinkenstein managed to turn the conversation into another channel and thus avert any explanation on the king's part. She thought it unbecoming a king to justify himself or to show himself weak or perplexed; and, besides that, she regarded it as the duty of those about him, to smooth over all that was unpleasant as gracefully as possible.

The king appreciated her considerateness. He asked her whether she had often seen the queen during the last few days, and who was now waiting on her. The Countess informed him that she had only once been with the queen, who had expressed a wish in regard to his royal highness the crown prince.

"Ah, how is the prince?" asked the king. During all these days, he had scarcely thought of his child, and now, as if with renewed consciousness of the fact, he remembered that he had a son.

"Remarkably well," replied the Countess, who went on to name the various ladies and gentlemen of the court who were now in attendance upon her majesty the queen. No one had seen her during the last few days, except Madame Leoni, who had been with her constantly, and the Doctor, who had conversed with her for hours.

The king gave orders to have the prince brought into his apartments. He kissed the boy, whose round and delicate little hand played with his father's face.

"Thou shalt honor thy father—if I could only wipe away that one reproach," said he to himself.

He felt as if his child's touch had endowed him with new strength, and was about to proceed to the queen's apartments

when Schnabelsdorf was announced. The king was obliged to remain and receive him.

The prime minister informed him that the result of all the elections was now known, and that his position would be a difficult one, for the majority had been on the side of the opposition.

The king shrugged his shoulders and said:

"We must await events."

Schnabelsdorf looked astounded at this indifference. What could have happened?

"There is only one new election necessary," said he. "Your Majesty is aware that Count Eberhard Wildenort was elected as a deputy?"

"I know," said the king. "Why mention this?"

Schnabelsdorf dropped his eyes and added: "I am informed that Colonel von Bronnen, Your Majesty's adjutant general, whose name has already been mentioned in that connection, is to be brought forward as a candidate."

"Bronnen will refuse to stand," said the king.

Schnabelsdorf received this remark with an almost imperceptible bow. He had a presentiment of what was going on.

The king permitted his minister to inform him of what was most urgent, but begged him to be brief.

Schnabelsdorf was very brief.

The king dismissed him. His intention was to have Schnabelsdorf open the new chamber. If, as was to be expected, the majority were against him, Bronnen would form a new cabinet.

It was no slight struggle on the part of the king, to suffer that which ought to have emanated from his own will, to appear as a yielding, on his part, to the popular voice; but he felt that it was the first real proof of his subjection to the law, and he meant to find his highest glory in giving expression to the voice of the people.

His new motto: "True and free," again impressed itself upon him. Calm and self-possessed, he repaired to the queen's apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE queen had been informed of the king's return, and the calmness and self-command that she had regained seemed to vanish. As long as he remained at a distance, she felt herself secure in the lofty realm of thought; but now that he was near her, the thought of meeting him face to face made her tremble with fear. Her sense of injury loosened the weak foundations of the principles it had cost her such an effort to make her own.

It was already night when the queen heard her husband's voice in the ante-chamber. He wished to see her, he said, even if she

were asleep. He entered softly. She kept her eyes closed and forced herself to breathe as gently as possible. It was the first deceit of her life. She was only feigning sleep, and how often had he who now stood before her feigned sincerity and truth—? Her breathing became heavier; it required all her self-command to remain quiet. Horror at the idea of feigning death now possessed her.

She lay there motionless, with her hands folded, and her husband stood before her. She imagined that she felt his loving, affectionate glance—but what could his love or affection be? She felt his warm breath against her face. And now he felt her pulse, and yet she did not stir. She felt the kiss that he imprinted upon her hand, and yet she did not move. She heard him turn to Madame Leoni and say: "She sleeps quietly, thank God! Do n't tell her that I was here." She heard his words, and his soft footsteps while he left the room, and yet she did not move. Lest her attendant should discover the deception, she was obliged to keep up the appearance of being asleep and to affect entire ignorance of what had passed.

When the king reached the ante-room, he said to the waiting-woman:

"I thank you, dear Leoni!"

"Your Majesty," replied Madame Leoni, with a profound bow.

"You have of late afforded fresh proofs of your attachment to the queen. I shall not forget it. It is a comfort to me to know that she is surrounded by such careful attendants. My dear Leoni, do all you can to secure the queen as much repose as possible; and if she should wish for anything particular, which you think that the ladies of the court or Countess Brinkenstein need know nothing of, address yourself to me. Has the queen spoken much during the last few days?"

"O yes! unfortunately, too much; that's what makes her so exhausted. She talked for hours, incessantly."

"Was it with you that she talked so much?"

"O no!"

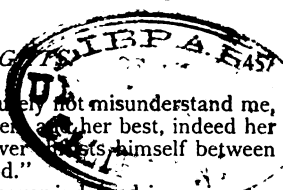
"Then it was with the Doctor?"

"It was. But pardon me, Your Majesty, it seems to me that his medicines consist of words."

The king remembered that Madame Leoni owed a grudge to the queen, and a still greater one to Gunther, because the position of ayah to the crown prince had been given to Madame von Gerloff, instead of her. He was not disposed to take advantage of this, and only said:

"The physician, dear Leoni, should always be the confidant."

"Certainly, Your Majesty; but our noble queen is so despondent, and it seems to me it would be far better to cheer her up and make her laugh, instead of conversing about such difficult and



terrible subjects. Your Majesty will surely not misunderstand me, but I should like to help our noble queen, and her best, indeed her only helper, is Your Majesty. Whoever puts himself between you and her does more harm than good."

The king felt concerned. He had never indulged in espionage, and now that he felt himself purified and elevated, was doubly averse to it. Nevertheless, he asked:

"Pray, tell me what has happened!"

"Ah! Your Majesty; I'd rather die than wrong my royal mistress, but what I am doing can't harm her; it is only meant to aid her."

"Confide all to me," said the king, in a soft voice,—himself displeased at what he was saying,—"you could not so demean yourself as to be a spy on the words and actions of others, nor could I desire or permit you to do so; but it is necessary for me to know how the queen can be helped out of her present trouble, and, therefore, I ought to be informed of what is told her, and how matters are discussed here."

"Certainly, Your Majesty," replied Madame Leoni, and, having apologized for the ugly words, she informed him how the physician had spoken of the origin of the mud in the highways, how a pure drop from the heavenly clouds mingles with the dust of the road; and that they had gone on to talk of sculpture, of *haut relief* and *bas relief*.

Madame Leoni could only furnish a disconnected statement, but the king already knew enough.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON the following morning, the king sent word to the queen that he must see her.

He hastened to her.

They were both alone in the apartment.

The king was about to embrace his wife.

She begged him to be seated.

"As you please," said he, in a gentle voice. He was resolved to win her back to him, in candor and love.

"Will you speak first, or shall I?" he asked, after a pause.

His voice was clear and distinct, and startled her. She observed his fresh appearance, and grew still paler. She pressed her hand to her heart; she could not speak.

"Well, then let me speak. Mathilde, we won each other in sincere love. I frankly confess that I have sinned deeply against you and others, and now I beg you to believe in my sincere repentance. Do n't judge me meanly, or in a narrow sense!"

"Not meanly? O yes, I understand! To great minds like yourself, morality is narrow-mindedness. Yours are the large, the

world-embracing hearts, and I am a bigoted, self-opinionated creature!"

"Mathilde, do n't say that; I did n't mean to wound you."

"O no! you did n't mean to wound me; certainly not, never!"

"Mathilde, with that tone we shall never arrive at perfect harmony. Ask anything of me, as a proof of my repentance and conversion. You have the right to do so; I swear to you—"

"Do n't swear. I pity you,—there's nothing left by which you can swear. Swear by the head of your child—the child at whose cradle you exchanged adulterous words and glances with her!"

"Let the future efface all recollection of the past!"

"Very well. Issue a royal mandate: The world and, above all, my wife, are to forget that there ever was a Countess Irma; such is my royal will."

The king gazed at his wife in astonishment. Was this the same tender, sensitive being? What great change had come over her?

"Let the dead rest!" said he, at last.

"But the dead do not let us rest. She looks at me through your eyes, speaks to me with your lips, touches me with your hand; for your hand, your lips, your eyes, were hers."

"I will withdraw until you regain your composure."

"No, stay! I am quite composed. Perhaps you would rather not hear what I have to say?"

"I will listen to it all," said the king, seating himself; "proceed."

"Well, then let me tell you that you have desecrated a sanctuary, lovelier and more beautiful than any that ever existed on earth—the sanctuary in which you were worshiped. I may tell you this, for the temple is no more and you are no longer in it. I desired to be one with you in everything; in every breath, in every word, in every glance, even though it was directed to Him who is on high. It was for that, that I offered to sacrifice my faith—"

"Do you wish to balance accounts between us? Then remember that I did n't ask you to make that sacrifice; it would have been a burden. The idea of its being a sacrifice is out of the question."

"Very well; I'll say no more about that. I merely wished to tell you that what I regarded as a sacrifice, you looked upon as weakness. Enough of that, however. You were false to your marriage vow, and that, too, with her whom I regarded as my friend! I know the way of the world, in such matters. The Steigeneck whom your father—"

"Do n't insult my father's memory! Say what you choose of me, but do n't insult my father!"

"I do n't insult him; I honor him. Compared with you, he was pure and virtuous. He was free from all affectation of morality, from lying, deceit and treachery!"

"Who is it that speaks?" said the king, interrupting her. "Is this my wife? Is it a queen who utters these words?"

"They ought not to be my words; you have forced them upon me. But let us not dispute about words. Your father bestowed his affections on a stranger who lived at a distance, and who did not know his wife. Compared with your conduct, his was virtue itself. You were false to me, and that, too, with a friend who was constantly at my side; we conversed together of love, of the stars, of the trees, the mountains and the valleys, and our thoughts seemed as one. Side by side, we beheld the works of art, we sang, we played together—and yet you could both act thus, while at my side, and enter the inner sanctuary of that which is highest in life. The sky, the earth, all that was pure and noble in thought or word—you have destroyed them all. I would like to know the day when, by word or glance, you both ventured to begin your false game! With every kiss you gave her, you must have said: 'Ah, my wife—how unhappy I am—she's so narrow-minded, so devoid of grandeur—' Don't interrupt me! Of one thing I am sure: no husband or wife can ever touch the hand of another, in love, without feeling: 'I am miserable.' It is n't hatred and revenge that now speak through me, it is justice! As long as I still loved you, I could hate you; but now I simply judge you. You must bear the consequences of your actions. Justice requires that. I pity and deplore your lot. How will you ever delight in the forest, when she whom you loaded with sin, fled through the forest unto death? How can you look at the lake into which her sin plunged her? The whole world is annihilated to you, you poor creature! How your pen must tremble when you again sign a death sentence—you've murdered both the dead and the living! You may write 'pardon,' but who will pardon you, 'king by the grace of God'?"

"Mathilde, I once believed you incapable of even alluding to that which is unseemly."

"Did you believe it? and what would you call unseemly in your case?"

"Speak on, speak on!" said the king, as the queen now paused and heaved a sigh. He saw the fire consuming all that was dearest to him on earth, and, at the same time, recognized the beauty of the flame. There are strange chords in the human soul, and the king, although filled with shame and indignation, could not but admire the power revealed by his wife. He had never dreamed of its existence. She was greater and stronger than he had ever imagined, and his appeal to her seemed to acknowledge her supremacy. This made her the more indignant and, with forced composure, she continued:

"No one has a right to demand of another, of a prince, or even of yourself, that he should be a genius; but every one has a right to ask that you should be an upright man, a true husband and father. You could be that, just as easily as any peasant or day-laborer can."

Pain and resentment were depicted in the king's countenance.

"Mathilde," said he, at last, in a tremulous voice, "Mathilde, I am not speaking of myself; but consider how these words must injure you."

"I've considered all that. I know that the thousand little pleasures of life are no longer mine. I shall bear a burden which death alone can remove! I know that. But I've no pity for myself. Where love is dead, justice must reign!"

"Love? The love that could die was not love!"

"Do n't let us dispute. We've ceased to understand one another. Listen to my last, my irrevocable words. What is left me? to despise you, or to become despicable myself. Here I stand," said she, drawing herself up, and appearing taller than before, while a dark flush overspread her countenance, "here I stand and tell you that I despise you. I will live with you and by your side, as long as life remains; but I despise you. Know that, and now leave me. I shall appear with you this evening, at the court festival. You shall have no reason to complain of any breach of decorum. Once, love for you was all my life—that memory is mine; you need it not!"

The king arose. He wanted to speak, but it was long before he could utter a word.

"Does any one know of your sentiments towards me?" he asked, at last, in a hoarse voice.

"No; we owe it to our son that no one should know of it."

"Mathilde, I never would have believed that you could speak thus to me. But it does not come from you; another has forced himself between us. He taught you to think and speak thus!"

"You are the great master who has taught me to substitute hatred for love, and contempt for adoration."

"Does your friend, the Doctor, know nothing of what you are now inflicting upon me?"

"I cannot swear to you—you can no longer believe an oath—but this I can say: if Gunther knew that I had suffered myself to be carried away by the ardor of my past love for you, it would grieve him deeply, for anger, hatred, and revenge, are foreign to his great nature!"

"His great nature may be made very small!"

"You will not, you dare not, rob me of my only friend! I implore you! I'll ask for nothing more as long as I live. I'll be obedient and submissive. I can no longer offer you love. Grant me but this one request: leave me my only friend!"

"Your only friend? I do n't know that title. As far as I know, there is no such position at court."

"On my knees, I implore you! Do n't mortify him! let me keep this one friend. He's great, pure, noble; it is he alone who reconciles me to life!"

The queen was about to throw herself on her knees before the king. He touched her—she shuddered and drew herself up.

“Be proud!” exclaimed the king. “Be so! and bear the consequences! Be the exalted one, the pure drop from the heavenly cloud mingling with me, the dust of the highway—”

The queen looked up amazed. What was it she had heard? The words of her noble friend thus repeated and distorted. Her head swam.

“Be what you will!” continued the king. “Be alone, and seek support in yourself!”

He pulled at the betrothal ring on his finger. It was difficult to get it off, and his face grew red while he pulled at it with all his strength. At last, he drew it over his knuckle. Without saying a word, he laid the ring on the table before the queen.

He walked to the door. He stopped for a moment, as if listening for a word from her—a word to which he would have replied from the depths of his heart, a word which would have saved and reconciled them both.

The queen looked after him. Would he not turn again? would he not once more, with heart-piercing tone, cry: “Forgive me!” The love that still dwelt in her, impelled her towards him. It was but for a moment that the king paused. Involuntarily, the queen stretched her arms towards him—the moment had passed and, with it, the king had left.

The queen walked to the portiere, and stared fixedly at it. Then she fell back on the sofa and wept. She lay there weeping for a long while.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE queen was now doubly unhappy. She felt unutterable grief because of her lost love, and had, moreover, suffered herself to be led away by wicked and hateful passion. The sense of freedom, and of elevation, which Gunther had awakened in her, had vanished. And now that the heart-rending separation had taken place, it seemed to her like a death that had been foreseen. But, although we behold its approach from afar, death ever brings new and unlooked for woe in its train.

The queen went to the crown prince’s apartments. On her way, she passed by the king’s cabinet. She paused for a moment, and asked herself how it would be if she were to enter here, clasp him in her arms and say: “Let all be forgotten; you are unhappy as well as I, and I will help you to bear your lot.”

She passed on, for she felt afraid lest she might again appear to him as weak and wavering, while she meant to be strong.

When she saw her child, her eyes regained a bright expression. The child had not seen its mother weeping and wrestling with her

sorrow, and now she was with him again. "He, too, will come here," said an inner voice that she was almost loth to listen to. She trembled when she learned that the king had had the prince brought to his apartments that very day.

She waited for a long while. She would kiss the boy's little hand again and again, and would look around to see if the father were not coming.

He came not.

The king was sitting in his cabinet, his hands pressed against his burning brow. He had passed the turning point in his career, and he could no longer permit himself to be oppressed by private, personal griefs. He had repented, and that was sufficient. He was determined to effect a change in himself, and that was more than enough. Of what use were further accusations and penalties? A deep feeling of resentment against his wife arose within him. She was weak and revengeful. No, not weak; she was endowed with a power of which he had never had the faintest presentiment, and he felt deeply conscious of the grievous fault he had committed in deceiving such a wife. He was, however, unable to free himself from the thought that his punishment was an affront to his exalted position. And while his own life-fabric lay in ruins, why should he, with wondrous self-denial, set about righting the lives of others? The heart that is reconciled and at peace with itself, is the only one that can exert a reconciling and peaceful influence on others. A spirit of defiance and discontent moved him to abandon the reforms he had begun, for she who was nearest and dearest to him, his own wife, would not justly acknowledge them.

He sat there for a long while, dull and depressed. At length he arose, his face expressive of defiance and firmness. He had determined to accomplish the good, whether his efforts were appreciated or misjudged. His strength for good had conquered. Unaided, and for the sake of his own honor, he had determined to carry out the measures that he considered right, and the happiness that this would cause him must compensate for the lost pleasures of love.

There were great festivities at court that evening.

The betrothal of Princess Angelica to Prince Arnold was officially celebrated. The queen appeared, leaning on her husband's arm, and had a kind and gentle greeting for every one. She looked weak, but none the less beautiful.

No one was able to discover the faintest trace of the rupture between the royal pair, nor did any one notice that the ring was no longer on the king's hand.

The king and queen conversed with apparent cordiality, but she often looked as if she must ask him: "Has nothing happened?"

Then she would look about her fearfully, as if the spectre of Irma must suddenly appear in white, dripping garments.

When the king, accompanied by the queen, had made the round of the saloons, he saluted Bronnen most cordially and remained with him for some time, engaged in lively conversation.

The queen looked on in amazement. She well knew that Bronnen had secretly admired Irma, and had even sought her hand. How had it happened that the king had become so intimate with this man, and distinguished him above all the other members of the court? There was no opportunity to obtain information on this point. The whole summer palace was illuminated; the terrace was hung with variegated lamps; vessels of burning pitch were placed in the park, sending their brightness out into the autumn night; the band of Prince Arnold's regiment played merry airs, the glow of lights and the sounds of music were wafted far out into the valley and even into the mountains, on whose lonely heights there were human dwellings.

The queen met Gunther, but simply exchanged a few hasty words with him. The king greeted him politely as he passed by.

He won't be so cruel, thought the queen. There was a strange shyness in her expression whenever her eyes rested on Gunther, and, on one occasion, the king observed this and shook his head. The queen felt that Gunther must be displeased with her, for she had not acted according to the laws that he had explained to her.

On the following day, it was reported throughout the capital that Doctor Gunther had received his dismissal. The official gazette which contained an account of the betrothal festivities, announced that "His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to accept the resignation of his body physician, Privy Councilor Gunther, and, in token of his satisfaction, has conferred the cross of Commander of the **** Order upon him."

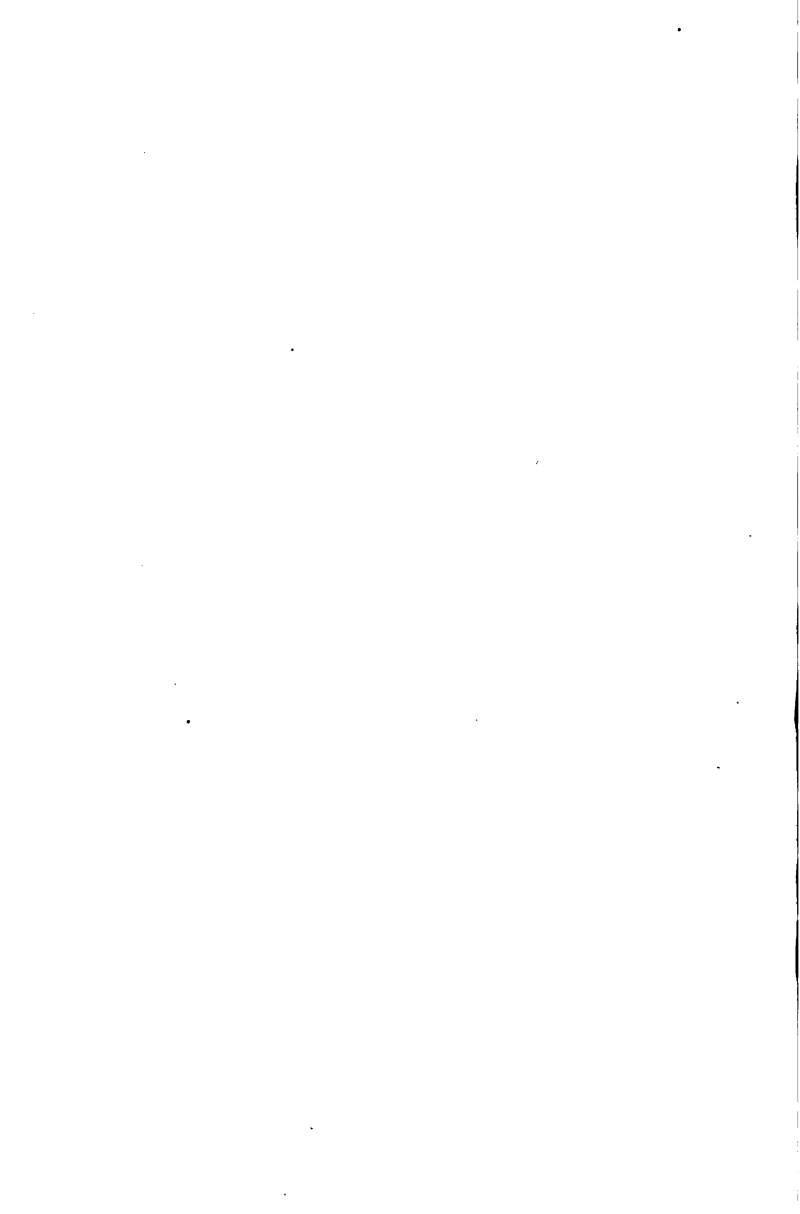
Among the personal announcements was the following:

"I bid farewell to all my friends and am about to remove to my native town **** in the Highlands.

"DOCTOR WILLIAM GUNTHER,
*"Privy Councilor and late Physician in Ordinary to His
Majesty the King."*



A STORY
OF
A SOLITARY WORLDLING.



BOOK VII.

(IRMA'S JOURNAL.)

CAST ashore—what is there left 'me, but to live on, because I am not dead?

For days and nights, this unsolved question kept me, as it were, hovering between heaven and earth, just as it was in the terrible moment when I glided down from the rock.

I have solved the problem.

I am working. I shall remain resolved, no matter what the result. I find it a relief to note down my thoughts and feelings.

I was ill,—of a fever, they tell me,—and now I am at work.

I had told the grandmother of what I could do, but there was no chance to apply it here. She took me out into the garden, and we gathered up the apples that Uncle Peter shook down from the tree. Then the old, blind pensioner, whose room is over mine, came out and told us, with angry cries, that a certain portion of the apples belonged to him. He tried to find one, so that he might taste it, and thus ascertain which tree we were shaking. I handed him an apple, and told him that I lived in the room under his.

We were still in the garden, when a man came who wanted to purchase two maple trees that were standing by the cross road, in order to use them for carving. This seemed like a ray of hope. I told the grandmother that I knew how to mold in clay, and that I thought I could easily learn how to carve in wood. And now I'm in the workshop, as a pupil.

This is my first free Sunday, and, while all are away at church, I am writing this.

*

I once knew a man who had already been kneeling on the sand-heap, the muskets aimed at him, and—he was pardoned. I have often seen him. O that I had asked him how he lived on!

*

There is no mirror in my room. I have determined never to see myself again.

And since I neither have, nor desire a mirror, let these pages be the mirror of my soul.

*

O this repose ! this solitude ! It is like rising from the lake, like life regained. And yet how calm, how restful !

Up here, and in thousands of other places on this earth, 't was ever thus, while, down below, I was about to commit a fearful sin !

*

I have just returned from the workshop. Formerly, when making excursions from the summer palace into the surrounding country, we would stop at the industrial villages and visit the large workshops, where everything was shown us. I used to feel a sense of shame—ah ! that was long ago—at the thought of our merely looking on for a moment, while others were working. And when we returned to our carriages and drove off, leaving the men still at their work, what must they have thought of us ?

I am now at the workbench myself.

*

Why does no religion place the command : “Thou shalt work” above all others ?

*

They say that the wound sucked by living lips heals quickly. O thou who art called queen ! I would like to suck up the blood that trickles from thy heart !

*

Did I destroy the letter to the queen, or did it reach her ?

*

I started with fright, when the grandmother asked me why I had pained the queen by informing her that I meant to take my life.

Why ? I know not why. All I know is that I could not help it ; it was the last, the unavoidable tribute I owed to truthfulness.

Why is it that we only concern ourselves about what others may think of us after death, when life has become but an empty sound ?

*

Sad and painful days.

I regarded it as my duty to write to the queen from my place of concealment. Uncle Peter, a true-hearted and obliging little man, who is always at my service and would like to show me a kindness every moment, offered to carry a letter for me to a distant town. The queen shall not grieve on my account—not for my death, at all events. I will let her know that I am yet alive, but that my life is one of expiation. If I only felt sure that I had really burnt the letters, or that they reached him and her. Him I need tell no more. The good mother noticed that something was troubling me—something that I had kept from her. She often came to me, but asked no questions. At last I could bear it no longer, and told her what I had determined on. She took me by the hand—whenever she means to make her words additionally impressive, she does this, as if she felt that she must hold fast to me physically—and said : “Child, you ’ve only to make up your mind clearly as

to what you mean to do. Ask your own heart whether you would n't rather be discovered. Ask your conscience."

I started. It is true, I should not care to do anything, but if it were to happen—

"Do n't give me your answer," continued the mother; "answer yourself, and then ask yourself whether, if you returned to where you once were, you would n't, on the morrow or the day after, wish to be away again. But let me tell you one thing: whatever you determine on, do it thoroughly. Do n't write at all, and let the queen mourn you; for it's much easier to grieve for the dead than for one who, though living, is lost; or else, write to her honestly and frankly: 'Here I am.' As I said before, whatever you do, let it be done thoroughly. O my child!" she added, "I fear it will be with you as it was with the poor soul. Do you know the story of the poor soul?"

"No."

"Then I'll tell it to you. There was once a young girl who, having gone astray and died an early death, descended into hell; and there Saint Peter could always hear her crying, from amidst the flames, 'Paul! Paul!' in tones that were so heart-rending that even the most wicked demons could n't find it in their hearts to mock at her. So one day Saint Peter went up to the gates of hell and enquired: 'My dear child, why are you always crying "Paul! Paul!" in such a pitiful voice?' and the girl replied: 'Ah, dear Saint Peter, what are all of hell's torments? To me, they're nothing. Paul is worse off than I am. How will he endure life without me? I only ask for one thing: let me return to the earth once more; only for a moment, so that I may see how he's getting on, and I'll be willing to remain in hell a hundred years longer.'

"'A hundred years!' said St Peter. 'Consider, my child; a hundred years is a long time.'

"'Not to me. O I implore you to let me see my Paul once more! After that, I'll certainly be quiet and submit patiently to everything.'

"Saint Peter resisted for a long while, but the poor soul gave him no peace, and at last he said: 'Well, you may go, for all I care; but you'll be sorry for it.'

"And so the poor soul returned to the earth, in order to see her beloved Paul. And when she got there, and saw him feasting and enjoying himself with others, she quietly went back to eternity and, shaking her head sadly, said: 'Now I'll return to hell and repent.' And then Saint Peter said to her: 'The hundred years you promised are forgiven you. During the one minute you passed on earth, you suffered more than you would have done in a hundred years of hell.'

"And that's the story of the poor soul."

I thirst for some spring outside of me, which would refresh and redeem me. I long for music, for faith, for some soul-liberating dedication of myself! I find it not. I must seek the spring within myself.

*

In deepest grief, it often seems to me as if it were not I who have suffered thus. I go my way, and it seems as if some one were telling me the story of what had happened to another.

*

For the first time in my life, I know what it is to feel that I am being borne with and favored. I really ought not to be here. I am eating the bread of charity. Now I know how the poor homeless ones must feel. If Hansei cared to do so, he could send me out of his house this very day, and what would become of me then?

*

I am obliged to eat in the company of my hospitable friends, and I find it no easy matter to do so. I pity Hansei, most of all. To him, it must seem as if a strange apparition—the phantom of one whom he knows not, was seated at his table. I destroy his happiness.

*

I have punctured my hand with the gimlet, just because, while at work, I am busy thinking of other things. My little pitchman has brought me a healing salve.

*

Antique forms of beauty cannot be worked in wood. It is inflexible, stubborn stuff and can, with difficulty, be made to yield to the designs of art. It is naught but a makeshift material.

*

"Oh, how glorious it must be to live up here!" How often is this expression heard during country excursions! But we forget that the atmosphere of country parties and that of home are two very different things. How different when the wind whistles over the stubble fields and rages among the leafless forest trees; when dull and heavy mists creep over the mountains; when, for days and days, the clouds hang upon the heights, and, now and then, suffer a summit to appear in phantom-like outline, only to hide it again; when, at night, the storms disturb your sleep, and it seems as if day would never come. Yes, ye pic-nic spirits, with garlands of fresh leaves on your hats! spend weeks up here without a sofa, without fresh bread; only think of it—without a sofa!

*

Solitude with happy, cheerful memories, must needs be peaceful and placid. It suggests the lonely tree that sends its roots through the rich soil and into the clear stream in the valley. But solitude with sad and dark memories, reminds me of the tree whose roots,

ever striking against rocks, must pass over and clamber around them. Thus, holding a rock in their embrace, they are like a heart laden with a heavy burden that it can never rid itself of.

*

Perfect solitude is when, for a whole day, no human eye has beheld your face. It does one good to know that no human eye has seen you, and that the glass that mirrors your features, is, as yet, unsullied by the breath of another.

*

Solitude is apt to make one superstitious. One naturally casts about him for some external support.

It always alarms me when, on beginning work in the morning, one of my tools drops from my hand. I feel that the day which begins thus, will prove a sad and troubled one. I fight down this superstitious feeling.

*

He who possesses a firm faith, although in solitude, is not alone.

*

My master is always out of humor. His wife and three daughters assist him at his work. Hansei has advanced the pay for my lessons. I am an apt pupil.

I notice that these people regard me as slightly demented. The little pitchman informed me that Hansei had given out this report, intending that it should serve as a sort of invisible cap. This gives me liberty and yet protects me, but at times it makes me feel uneasy.

My master also thinks that I am out of my mind. He addresses me cautiously, and is delighted when he finds that I have understood him.

*

The swallows are departing. Ah! I cannot deny that I fear the approaching winter. If I only do not become ill. That were terrible! It would force me to betray myself or—no, I dare not be ill. But I am still so nervous. It is hard for me to mention it, but it is hard to bear it. A cow in the stable near by has a bell on her neck, and day and night it keeps up its unrhythmic tinkling. But I must get used to it.

*

I really dread the winter. If it were only springtime, instead of autumn. Nature would be my friend. Nature is the same everywhere. But now winter faces me. I must reconcile myself to it, however, for we cannot arrange the seasons to suit ourselves. I will learn which is the stronger, my temperament or my will. I shall impose no thoughts upon my mind but those which ought to engage it.

I have determined upon this.

*

The shoemaker means to recognize Cinderella by her foot— he finds mine unusually small for that of a peasant girl.

I trust that the fairy tale may remain a fairy tale.

That touching air from Isouard's Cinderella :

Good child, thou must contented be,
A better lot's in store for thee,

Has been haunting me, all day long.

How simple the words ! Music is the fairy that invests Cinderella's accents with royal robes, and enthrones them on the lips of all mankind.

*

O happy nursery tale ! Thou askest not how the princess lived as poultry-maid. Thy fancy uttered its creative : "Let there be—" and behold ! it was.

But, in life, such transformations are not brought about without great effort.

Walpurga has rightly divined my feelings. It was but to-day that she said :

"You can't get used to things here. Life here must seem almost as strange to you as it did to me in the palace ; but, of course, it's easier to get used to a silken bed than to a sack of leaves."

I felt like saying : "And if one means to go home again, it's far easier to put up with such discomfort," but I repressed it. One ought not to torment such people with logical consequences. Their thoughts and feelings are like the singing of birds, without rhythm and, at best, like the folk-songs, whose melodies close on the third, instead of on the key note.

*

Since the alluring, glittering life of the great world could at any time have been mine, I find it easy to forego it.

Had I entered a convent and were living there, fettered by a vow and subject to restraint, I know that I should have mourned away my days behind the bars.

*

To be without gloves ! I never knew that one's hands could become so cold. I cannot realize that I am without gloves. When he drew off my glove, a shudder passed through me.—Was it a presentiment ?

*

In the mornings I feel the want of a thousand little conveniences, with which use had so familiarized me that I scarcely knew I possessed them. I am obliged to learn the affairs of every-day life from the good mother. It is just these things that we forget to learn. We are taught dancing, before we are really able to walk.

From cleaning our shoes in the morning to putting out the

lamps at night, how many are our wants, how many the helping hands we need! What with cooking, washing, scouring, drawing of water, and carrying wood, man finds no time to think of himself. Nature furnishes clothing and food to the beasts, but man must spin and cook for himself.

I have imposed a difficult task upon myself, for I have determined to allow no one to wait upon me. An anchorite cannot afford to be too cleanly or fastidious; but then I was not intended for an anchorite.

*

At first it oppressed me to think that I had become a Robinson Crusoe in spirit, but now I am proud of it.

He who is thrown upon himself, and is no longer able to live in accordance with custom, is cast away on a desert island, and must create everything anew for himself.

But why should I, whose heart was already borne down with its burdens, be obliged to suffer shipwreck, too?

*

When I look out into the night and all is dark, and there is no light to tell me: "Here are other beings like yourself," I feel oppressed with fear, as if I were alone upon the earth!

*

(October.)—This evening—Ah! the evenings are already long—it suddenly occurred to me: There are thousands who lead a life of affluence and pleasure, who move in society, and yet—

Why should I alone renounce the world, deprive myself of its pleasures, and bury myself in solitude?

Because I must and shall! I live only by the favor and charity of others. I have wasted my life, trifled it away. Shall I try to regain it in bitter earnest? I once trifled with words, but now they fetter and judge me!

*

"You're still too heavily laden?" said the grandmother.

"How so?"

"If a wagon's loaded too heavily, you can't grease its wheels so as to stop their creaking. You must wait till it's empty. Then you can raise it with a jack-screw, take off the wheels and grease the axles. The burden you still bear is the thoughts of the past; lay them aside, and you'll soon feel relieved."

*

At last I know why I get up in the mornings. Something seems to say to me: "Thou shalt labor. To-day, this will be finished; to-morrow, that." And when I lie down to rest, there is always something more in the world than there was at daybreak.

*

"Work!" "Work!" is the daily, hourly watchword here. They think of nothing but work. It is a necessity of their being.

just as growth is to the tree. It is this that makes them so self-reliant.

*

There is misery and discord, even here.

In the kindness of her heart, Walpurga said that she could not endure the thought of the old blind pensioner's being obliged to eat his meals alone, and that she meant to have him at the table with the rest.

"I won't have it!" said Hansei. "Not a word more about it; I won't have it."

"Why not?"

"Why? You ought to know that yourself. If Jochem has once been at the table, you can never get rid of him again. So we'd better not have him at all. You do n't know how an old blind man eats."

After that, not a word was spoken during the meal. Walpurga made believe that she was eating, but she was merely choking down her tears, and left the table soon afterward. She is keenly sensitive to such rudeness and cruelty; but she never complains, not even to me.

*

(During a violent storm.)

What a fright I have had to-day! My little pitchman told me that a man had hanged himself somewhere in the vicinity.

"It had to come," thought he. "The man had hanged himself fifteen years ago, but they cut him down, and he lived on. But it was just as if he always had a rope around his neck—people who've once tried anything of that sort, never die a natural death."

How his words startled me.

Can it be that such dread fate is yet in store for me?

I answer: No! It shall not be!

*

To sit in my warm room and look out at the driving snowstorm, is like going back in thought to the hurly-burly of the great world.

Nine weeks have passed already.

I still have a dull, heavy feeling, as if I had been struck in the head with a hammer. I merely exist, but it seems as if life were again dawning upon me. When I awake in the mornings, I am obliged to ask myself who and where I am, and to recall all my woe. But then work soon summons me away.

*

I have nothing more to look for, be it from the outer world, or the morrow. I am forced back upon myself and the present. For me, there are neither letters nor books, and the very roads are closed. To arise in the morning and know that no tidings, whether of joy or sadness, can come from without; to have noth-

ing to fall back upon but one's self and the undying laws of nature: he who can lead such a life, self-contained and yet contented, must be like the child illuminated by its own radiance—the child painted by Correggio.

Hammer and axe, file and saw, all that once seemed to me instruments of torture for poor enslaved humanity, I have found the instruments of deliverance. They banish the demons that dwell within us. Where these tools are wielded by industrious hands, evil spirits cannot tarry. The redeemer who will consecrate labor, is yet to come.

*

At last, I find myself obliged to be content without doing anything in the way of art.

Although wood is useful, and in many respects indispensable, it cannot be applied to serve beauty apart from usefulness. The substance with which my art, or rather trade, employs itself is unequal to the demands of art, except for decorative purposes. Bronze and marble speak a universal language, but a wooden image always retains a provincial character. It addresses us in dialect, as it were, and never attains to the perfect expression of the ideal. We can make wooden effigies of animals or plants with which we are familiar, and can even carve angels in *relievo*, but to make a life-size bust, or human figure, of wood, were entirely out of the question.

Wood carving is only the beginning of art and is faltering, or, at best, monotonous, in its expression. What has once existed as an organism cannot be transformed into a new organic structure. Stone and bronze, however, do not acquire organic shape, except at the hands of man.

If a Greek of the days of Pericles, were to behold our images of the saints, how he would shudder at our barbarism.

*

This journal is a comfort to me. I can express myself in my own language and feel perfectly at home. I cannot, at times, avoid regarding my constant use of the dialect of this region as a sort of affectation. Everything that I say appears to me distorted. I feel as if wearing a strange costume, and as if my soul were concealed behind an iron mask. Although I am a child of the mountains, the words I utter seem strange and foreign. A dialect proves poverty of resources. It is an imperfect instrument; a kettle-drum, for instance, on which one can play neither concertos nor fantasias. Or, to put it differently, the language of Lessing and Goethe is like the beautiful butterfly that has left the chrysalis to which it can never more return.

Alas! The one terrible thought confronts me at every turn. I have offended and denied you, ye who represent the spirit of my people and of humanity. You fostered me, and I have abused

the gifts which education bestowed upon me. I must remain in exile.

*

The fire that still smoulders within me must be extinguished.

My heart is so heavy that it seems to drag me down, as if weights were hanging to me.

*

I am so weary, so exhausted, that I feel as though my limbs must break under me ! I should like to do nothing but sleep ; to sleep always.

*

I should like to perform a pilgrimage to some place or person, as an act of expiation.

I now understand the basis of a religion of symbols—a religion that speaks to the eye.

I will go hence—to Italy, to Spain, to Paris, to the East, to America. I will go to Rome and become an artist. I must be one. If I am still to live on in the wide world, I must enjoy it fully and deny myself nothing, for I am not of a self-sacrificing temperament. I could hurl the full cup of life into the abyss, but to see it before my eyes, and yet languish and mortify myself—that I cannot do. I will, I must go. Something calls me hence. Naples lies before me. I see a villa on the shore ; merry excursions by water ; a crowd of laughing, singing, gaily-attired creatures—I plunge into the current of life. Better there than in that of death. And yet—I cannot—

*

A gloomy, terrible, twilight hour. Something urges me to turn back, and tells me that the whole world is mine. What has happened ? Are there not thousands like me, who live honored, oblivious of themselves ? What is it within me that whispers : “ You must expiate ? ” I can go hence. It will seem as if nothing had occurred. “ A piquant adventure,” “ a disappearance for a few weeks.”—What more can they say ? All I need is to be bold—the carriage rolls along, all salute me. I am beautiful, and no one will see the writing on my brow, for a diadem sparkles there.

But the terrible words are written there—it seems as if I could behold my own soul face to face.

*

There is a childhood of the soul and, with all her experience, the grandmother possesses it. Oh, that I could gain that childlike feeling ! But have not those who seek it, for ever lost it ?

*

Old Jochem often brings his money to me, and makes me count it for him, piece by piece. He maintains that one is so often cheated in money matters.

My little pitchman told me that the peasants almost always

treat their aged parents who have given up their property to them, with great unkindness, and then he asked me: "Why must Jochem live so long? He has nothing in the world but hatred and mistrust." I know no answer.

Old Jochem is a veritable peasant Lear, but as he is able to complain at the court of justice, and has actually done so, his case is not pure tragedy.

But there is no court of justice at which a king can complain; nor does he desire one; and hence his fate is great and tragic.

My friend, call me when thou standest in judgment upon thyself. I am the only one who dare accuse thee, and yet I accuse not thee, but myself. And I am expiating my guilt.

*

The open hearth-fire affords me many happy moments. How beautiful a fire is! What are all jewels, compared with it? Poor old Jochem cannot see the fire. It is the most beautiful thing in every house—Men should be fire-worshippers.

"You've had good thoughts," said Hansei to me, when I was sitting by the open window to-day. "I could tell it by your looks." He evidently longed to put a question to me, but he is determined to keep his resolution. He never asks me anything and, to avoid doing so, often changes the form of his sentences. I told him my thoughts, and his manner seemed to imply: "It is n't worth while to think of such things."

"Yes," said Hansei at last, "that's true enough. When one sits by the fire, his thoughts will roam."

To Hansei's notion, nothing in the world is so objectionable as taking a walk. He cannot conceive why one should roam about, where there is nothing to seek and nothing to do, and why, under such circumstances, one would not rather lie down on the long bench and go to sleep.

*

When I think of good Kent, I always imagine him as having a rich, full voice, like that of Bronnen, whom, in his youth, he must have resembled.

Certain figures pass in procession before my mind's eye. The queen and Bronnen are the only ones ever present; the king vanished with the forgotten past. In my dreams, many visit me, but he never comes. Why, I know not. I cannot solve the enigma.

To one who, when alone, stops to think, many things lose in value, human beings among the rest. Personally, Gunther was no more to me than another would have been. Emma was a mere echo.

If we thus reckon over our possessions, we find them little enough, and I have left but little behind me in the world.

*

The ringing of the sleigh bells is the only sound one hears. The

woods are full of busy workmen. Snow and ice, which block the roads elsewhere, here serve as highways.

*

Labor, by sending its fruits out into the world, places our vital force at the disposal of others. The work which I have fashioned goes out among men, and yet I am left undisturbed in my solitude and concealment.

Man's work leaves him. It seems to me that I once met with the same idea in Ottilia's journal.

*

The dog is the friend and confidant of solitary man. Lonely, deserted spots, like this, aid one to appreciate his faithfulness, for he fails not to give notice of every unwonted occurrence.

†

I often rush to the window when the dog barks—who knows what stranger may have come?

Suppose the intendant or Gunther were suddenly to come, and ask me to follow them back into the world?

The very thought makes me tremble.

Would I be obliged to obey?

*

To know that I had, at one time, renounced the world, and that it was but a step and a leap—makes it easier to bear with life. I am now beyond misfortune's reach.

And yet—if life were to claim me again—

*

I am but an ant dragging a pine-needle.

*

I am not quite forsaken. I bear, within me, memories of melodies and pictures, and, above all, songs of our great master, Goethe.

“On every height there lies repose.”

This passage has occurred to me hundreds of times, refreshing me just as if it were a gentle, cooling dew, falling upon a parched field. I delight in the harmonious cadence and in the simple words!

I could not rest until I had repeated the song to some one. I recited it to the old pensioner; he understood it, and my little pitchman has already gotten it by heart. How fortunate is the poet! One short hour of his life becomes undying to thousands after him. How I delight in these precious memories! I am like the old pensioner, who has learnt a few songs and quietly sings them to himself.

*

I am beginning to feel something like veneration for the old pensioner.

Early this morning, he came to me, dressed in his Sunday clothes, and wearing the medal which he received in the war of liberation. It was not without a certain air of pride that he said: "They're reading a mass for me at church to-day. I served under Napoleon in those days, just as the king did, too. It was in the year 'nine' and, on this very day, up to three o'clock—that is, some time between three and four—I was sound and hearty, when, all at once, I was struck by a ball, here in the third rib—that's why I wear my medal on the right side. I fell to the earth, thinking: Good night, world! God keep thee, my dear sweetheart! She who was afterward my wife, was my sweetheart at that time. They extracted the ball with a crossbill, and I kept on smoking while they were at work. My pipe never went out once, and I was soon all right again. But one does n't easily forget such a day, and so I arranged it, at the church, that they should read a mass for me on this day. See, this is the ball and, when they bury me, I want them to lay it on my third rib."

He showed me the ball. He carried it in a leather purse. After that a child that he had hired for the purpose led him down into the village.

I will now be more patient with the unfortunate old man. His life was a drop in the ocean of history—struck by the enemy's bullet—! A leaden ball can be extracted, why cannot also—

When I reflect on the daily events of the life I now lead, all my thoughts seem to lose themselves in the one unsolvable problem.

The grandmother told me a strange truth to day. I had been telling her that, even in the past, I had never been perfectly happy, when she replied:

"You deceived yourself. It's always so in the world. Those who are deceived, have deceived themselves, but they're never willing honestly to confess it.

*

Uncle Peter is the very embodiment of cheerful poverty. He is always in a good humor, and I have been the means of making him quite happy. He brings my work, carries away what I have finished, and, between us, we have quite a handsome profit. He also assists me in preparing the wood, and he handles saw and axe as deftly as a bird does its claws and beak.

*

To-day I received the first money that I ever earned by the work of my hands. Uncle Peter counted it out to me on the table. He refuses paper money. Nothing but silver will satisfy him. "Ready money smiles," said he, with a laugh in which I could not help joining. How small are these gains, and yet how encouraging. I have earned them. All my life long, I have merely enjoyed what others have offered me. It was a privilege, inherited from my ancestors, that others should labor for me.

I can now manage to pay Walpurga something for my support. She refused to receive pay, but I shall insist upon it.

*

It is well that my employment is, to a great extent, a mechanical one, comprising much which is necessary and requires neither reflection nor contrivance. Certain things must be done, and there is but one way of doing them. If I were obliged to do anything that required great mental exertion, it would be the death of me.

*

It is now four months since I came here.

My hands have become hardened.

The treatment I receive from those about me, satisfies me that their affection for me is sincere.

*

If one could only always remain the same—that is, in the full possession of one's powers.

I often give way to fits of depression and feel completely undone, forsaken, weak and helpless, and as if help must come from somewhere. But whence? and from whom?

I am obliged, with each succeeding day, to overcome the melancholy that oppresses me during the mornings. In the evenings, I am calm—for I am weary then.

*

We hear the falling rain, but not the snow. Bitter grief is violent; resignation, calm and silent.

*

It is bitter cold up here; but the woods are near us, and my monster of a tile stove is a faithful friend who preserves his warmth.

*

Literally speaking, when Hansei returns from the forest it often takes him an hour to thaw, and regain control of his voice and movements. Until then, it is best not to talk with him, for he is easily offended; but when he has thawed, he is quite happy again, and always says: "I thank God that I've been a woodsman!"

He is evidently thinking of some method of improving the forests, but he does not say what it is.

The lower orders always have overheated rooms. They enjoy intoxication, even that of heat.

*

I have no mirror. There is no need of my knowing how I look. A mirror is the beginning and the cause of self-consciousness. A beast does not see itself—it is only seen by others—and yet, whether it be the bird on yonder bough, or the cat that sits before my window, it adorns itself. I, too, dress myself carefully, and for my own sake, and am ill at ease when my clothes are loose or illfitting.

*

When I first came here, I found it quite difficult to associate with those about me, but now I find comfort and self-forgetfulness in my intercourse with them. I should not like to darken their existence, but to brighten it, instead. They feel that while I partake, I also contribute my share.

I think the idea is Goethe's.

*

There was great joy in the house to-day, owing to the unexpected visit of Walpurga's friend and companion Stasi, with her husband, a forester. What happiness, what joy, and what an interchange of experiences!

Hansei at once invited the forester to be sponsor to his boy, for boy it must be. Walpurga quickly said that she would like to show her friend through the house, and I was obliged to go with her.

Among the higher classes, love may be greater, may possess more energy, more depth, and more of all that is allied to passion; but the lower orders seem to possess greater faithfulness and constancy. Work teaches us to be faithful.

*

I have been out in the forest with Hansei. Oh how beautiful! We passed a frozen waterfall; the crystal columns sparkled in the sunshine. Hansei pointed out two trees that were far up the mountain. He means to have them felled for me, so that I may have the best wood for my work. Am I expected to work up two whole trees?

Hansei was quite amused, when I told him I had not forgotten his rule of the mountain: "Go right on, and never stop."

Mountain-climbing in winter has made me very tired, but I feel quite well.

*

I have often wondered why I never heard any mention of Hansei's family. The little pitchman has just told me that his mother died an early death, and that he never knew his father.

This accounts for much in Hansei's behavior, and only renders it the more beautiful.

*

We are feasting on meat broth.

Great is Hansei, the dispenser of good!

Yes, he is great. How all our illusions vanish! An Homeric hero who cuts up swine and cooks and roasts them, remains a hero for all, and Hansei is as good as any of them, although it be not with the sword.

There is Homeric feasting throughout the farm. They all bite with teeth as good as those of Menelaus.

*

The greatest blessings are pure blood, steeled sinews and strong nerves.

But he who, besides these, possesses a quiet conscience is the happiest of creatures.

*

I love the twilight—day fading into night. He who lives in communion with nature is the only one whose life does full justice to each day.

Man is the only being who lives far into the night. Light and fire make us what we are.

Schnabelsdorf the omniscient, once said: "The hour at which men retire is the measure of their civilization."

At court, they are just sitting down to dinner. They are joking and laughing, and telling each other anecdotes. If I were suddenly to appear among them?

No, I shall not disturb ye!

In a little while, they will be driving to the theatre. Isn't to-day—? I had almost forgotten it—yes, this is my birthday. It was to-day a year ago that I went to the ball, in the character of the Lady of the Lake, and it was there he said to me—it was in the palmhouse—I can still hear his soft voice: "I have purposely chosen this day. You alone are to know it. You and I."

Oh! that night!

I wonder if they are thinking of me there?

The Egyptians, at all their festivals, displayed mementoes of their dead. I cannot write any more—I will light the candle—I must work.

*

There is a deaf mute who lives down in the village and works at coarse wood carvings. He has neither learned to read nor to write, nor has he ever had any religious instruction. He knows nothing at all; but he does know the church festivals, the holidays, and Shrove Tuesday especially. On those days he will plant himself, with his umbrella, in front of the church, and watch the peasants as they go by. If he sees one who pleases him, he walks up to him, takes off his coat and sits down at the table and, without saying a word, they give him food and drink for three days.

And thus he happened to come to our house. Sometimes he cries, and cannot tell why, but he endeavors to express himself by dumb motions. The little pitchman declares that he cries because he can't eat any more.

I have tried to make myself intelligible to him, but we do not understand each other.

*

(Ash Wednesday.)—To-day, every one in the house is silent and thoughtful. Every brow was strewn with ashes, while they repeated: "Mortal! remember that thou art dust."

Ah! mine is a long Ash Wednesday, after a mad carnival!

*

In my mind's eye, I often behold the picture of the Egyptian princess. Her garments have fallen from her nude form and, with loosened hair, she kneels in prayer by her open grave.

When wilt thou receive me, all-merciful mother earth?

I am reminded of the simple grandeur of Antigone's answer to Creon, who has just announced to her the sentence of death:

"I knew that I should die; thou only tellest me when."

*

I shall quietly bear the consequences of my actions, relying on myself, looking for no aid, either material or spiritual, from without.

*

When the people have finished repeating the Ave Maria during the tolling of the vesper bell, they say "Good evening" to each other. It is a beautiful custom, and seems to say that they have returned from heaven unto those whom they love on earth.

*

When there is no one by, Walpurga always addresses me as "Countess," and treats me with the deference she deems me entitled to.

Everything seems reversed. At one time, I used to address *him* familiarly in private, and in public—

Ah! that one memory forever thrusts itself in my way!

If I were to become sensitive, it would be the most terrible thing that could happen to me. Perhaps I am so, already. The sensitive being is as one unarmed among those who are fully armed, as one unveiled where all the rest are masked.

I will, I must be strong!

*

Walpurga brought me some flower-pots to-day, with rosemary, geranium and oleander.

Hansei had brought them from the place of a great doctor who, he says, lives at some distance from here, in the valley. His gardener is allowed to sell plants, and Walpurga brought them to me, saying: "You've always had flowers about you, and these will last through the winter."

These few plants make me happy. The flower does not ask what sort of a pot it is in, so long as it gets its share of sunshine and rain. What enjoyment do those who dwell in the palace have, of the hothouse flowers? They neither planted nor tended them; they are strangers to each other.

*

Hansei came to me to-day and said:

"Irmgard, if I've ever wronged you—though I don't know that I have—I beg you to forgive me!"

"What makes you ask me that question?"

"Because to-morrow we go to confession and communion."

The tears that fall upon these pages are my confession, a confession that I cannot frame in words.

* /

Why was I obliged to cross the threshold of evil before entering this circumscribed and yet peaceful existence? Why not pure and free, proud and strong?

I have somewhere read that Francis of Assisi, returning, early in the morning, with the merry fellows who had been his comrades in the drinking bout of the night before, was suddenly seized by the Holy Spirit and, renouncing the world, led a holy life ever afterward.

And must it always be through paths of sin?

But far sadder is the question: Why were you, O queen! obliged to suffer thus?

*

I often wander about the fields in the pouring rain, and feeling like a prisoner. What keeps me here? what lures me hence?

*

I lead the life of a prisoner, confined by walls and iron gratings formed by my own will.

I endure all the pain of exile!

I live in a state of torpor. Why must I wait for death?

It often seems to me as if I were lying at the edge of a precipice, and yet cannot awake and rise.

Whither should I go?

*

The thought sometimes flashes across the desert waste that fills my soul, and drags me along, like a powerless rider mounted on some enchanted steed: "You know nothing of the world you have left behind you: those who are about you conceal what knowledge they may possess, and you dare not ask."

How would it be if the queen were dead, and he who once loved you and whom you loved in return—ah, so deeply!—were doubly alone and forsaken, and grieving because of thee? Let him have but the faintest token that you are still alive, and he will come for you, and, mounted on a white palfrey, you shall again enter the palace as queen. All will be expiated, all will be forgiven. You will be a friend to the people. You know them, for you have lived and suffered with them— This thought often seizes me and envelops me, as it were, in an enchanted net. I cannot rid myself of it, and I seem to hear voices and trumpet tones, calling me hence. I have not yet quieted the wild brood that dwell in my soul.

*

Mysterious demons slumber within our souls. At the faintest call, they raise their heads and crawl from their hiding place. They have cunning eyes and can readily change their shapes. They can appear as virtues, and, borrowing priestly robes, can

speak the language of sympathy: "Have pity on yourself and others." They make a show of their power and love of action, and say: "You can bestow happiness on one and on many. You can do great and good service to one and to the multitude."

I annihilated them. I held the light up to their eyes, and they vanished.

Thou livest, queen! Friend whom I have so deeply injured, thou livest! I do not ask, nor do I wish to know, whether thou art dead.

Thou livest, and my only wish is that thou mightst know of the life of repentance that I am now leading, and how little compassion I have for myself.

*

The Greek drama, "Prometheus Bound," occurs to me. Prometheus was the first anchorite. He was fettered from without; we fetter ourselves by vows or the rules of an order.

I am neither a Prometheus, nor a nun.

*

There is but one thing, which the outer world might afford me, that I still long for, and that is the music of a large orchestra. Fortunately, I often hear it in my dreams. How strange! While sleeping, my soul plays on all instruments, and performs great orchestral works which I never entirely succeeded in committing to memory.

We lead a dual life after all.

*

Freedom and labor are the noblest prerogatives of man.
 Solitude and industry constitute my all in all.

*

Walpurga has never referred to the warning she once gave me. With a rude hand, she snatched me from the edge of the precipice and, in return, I scolded and deceived her, while deceiving myself. She represses everything that might remind me of that scene.

*

To-day, Jochem confided to me the one grief that clouds his life: "They lead old oxen and cows to the slaughter-house," said he; "old horses and old dogs they shoot, and old men they feed to death—that's all the difference."

*

The dwelling-house on our farm has been neglected and is sadly in need of repair; but Hansei is not inclined to begin building at once.

"We must make shift with the old house," he says, "the work must be done first." And, besides this, he has a certain dread of what people may say. The house had been good enough for those who had been there before him—why should n't it be good enough for him?

Even the farmer, on his lonely estate, is not perfectly independent. He who cares for the opinion of others, must allow it to affect his actions.

These are the chains that make slaves of us all.

*

(March 1st.)—Joy and happiness have entered the house. New light has awakened in me, too, as if my life were something more than mere darkness. Walpurga has a boy. Hansei's happiness is complete, and he never mentions the boy except as "the young freeholder."

*

The christening is over. I felt sorry that I was unable to accompany them to church, but I could not.

*

I have laid the peasant's garb aside. It was in place while I was a fugitive, but now I have no further need of it. I wear dresses of simple calico, like those worn by many of the country people who employ themselves with housework. All that I have retained is my green hat, which I find quite useful, as it helps to hide my face.

I have laid aside many outer garments; how many inner ones must I still put off?

*

Fear and anxiety are gradually leaving me.

I have been at the village, and for the first time. The houses stand apart, on the mountain meadows. Viewed from above, they almost look like a scattered flock of sheep.

*

The rushing of the waters and the rustling of the forests sound so strangely at night, and yet the rushing and rustling are unceasing. How vain, how small is the child of man!

*

Oh, how delightful it is to be awakened by the song of the finch, and to find all nature refreshed by the invigorating morning air!

*

(April 19th.)—A heavy fog all day. The mist forms a veil which hides nature's death and awakening from view.

*

The nightingale by yonder brook, sings all day long and through the night. What unwearying power! What an inexhaustible fount of song!

While I write, its song seems to come nearer, as if it knew that I long for it.

*

I see every opening bud, and wait to see the ferns unfold their leaves. Even the rough maple has a delicate blossom. Every-

thing is blooming or singing. There is music, even in the cackling of the hens. The world is full of infinite variety.

*

Oh, how delightful to watch for every green leaf, and for the opening of every bud. Nature's greatest charm is that she is never in haste. She can wait, and all we need do is—to wait upon her.

*

At first, we attempt to note every stage of growth, but we soon find that an impossibility.

*

It needs but a single rainy day, and all the buds burst. Bright spring is with us once again. Spring produces a sort of mental unrest which seems to move in a course parallel with the impulse at work in nature.

*

The drooping birch is laden with rich clusters of blossoms, and its branches are swayed to and fro in mute yet melodious movements.

*

The best self-forgetfulness is to regard the things of this world with love and attention.—Perhaps attention already presupposes love, and that of the most unselfish kind.

*

A cuckoo comes quite close to the house at early morning and utters its cry.

*

(Whitsuntide.)—The preparations for the festival afford much pleasure, more perhaps than the festival itself. What kneading and baking, and what joy at the successful completion of the festal cake.

Joy which we have prepared for ourselves is perfect joy. And now comes the festival. Trees and human beings seem blooming with life, and yonder forest is borne towards us in the Whitsuntide favors they bring into the house.

Hansei has a new suit of the style worn in this section of the country. When he walked over the farm to day, the kindly "good-morning" which he bestowed upon every one, seemed full of happiness.

I am very sorry that I am again unable to accompany them to church. The festal feeling reaches its climax in church-going, but, even at home, the air is laden with the fragrant odor of the birch and holiday cake.

*

(May 24th.)—We have had a furious spring storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning. The trees swayed to and fro and bent as if they would break.

"That's bad," said my little pitchman, "though it's good for

the rye. A storm in springtime brings cold weather, while one in midsummer makes the days warmer than before."

How well this symbolizes precocious passion.

The bright sunshine has returned. I have been out of doors. Millions of blossoms are strewn about the ground and, in the forest, lay many dead young birds. They had ventured out of their nests too soon; the rain had wet their young wings and they could not return. Besides that, the nest no longer contained room for them. Forsaken and hungry, there was nothing left them but death!

Nature is terrible. It labors long and patiently to bring forth a being which it suddenly and wantonly suffers to die.

*

Sundays go hardest with me. One is used to look for something unusual on that day. We put on a particular dress and expect the world to do the same. On that day, more than on all others, I feel that I am in a strange world.

The brook murmurs and the birds sing, just as they did yesterday. What right have I to ask them to sing me a different song to-day?

Nature has no moods; they belong to man alone.

In this lies a heavy burden.

*

In former days, while watching the forms and colors of the clouds, I was obliged to look up into the sky. But now I see them resting on the earth below me.

I can pass hours, watching the passing clouds and their ever changing forms as reflected on the mountains. The earth itself was fashioned from such fluid masses. No artist can realize the extent of this cloud-world, or its wealth of form. Before our thoughts attain fixed shape, they, too, must pass through this nebulous state, in which, however, we are unable to perceive them.

*

Singing birds, in great variety, have clustered at the edge of the forest. The notes of the lark, the yellow-hammer, the green finch, the blackbird, the thrush, the redtail, and the titmouse are heard all at once. Only a few of the birds that build their nests deep in the forest, sing there.

*

In springtime, forest rills become brooks. In summer, naught is visible, save the dry bed of the stream. It is the same with our own lives.

*

When old Jochem hears me rejoice because spring has come, he always says: "What does it signify? In a few weeks, the days will begin to shorten again."

*

If human beings, like the trees, bore visible blossoms, these blossoms would assume a different shape and color, with each succeeding year. The blossoms of my soul were once so bright ; but now—

*

For the first time in my life, I have seen a pair of eagles soaring in the air. What a life theirs must be ! They hovered far overhead, and described a circle in their flight. About what were they circling ? Then they soared still higher and vanished in the empyrean.

The world still contains spirits whose flights are as free and as bold as that of the eagle. There is no creature that soars above the king of birds, no enemy that can approach him. But man sends forth the fatal ball and thus exerts an influence in regions which the eye alone can pierce.

He too was filled with pride when he had shot an eagle. And why ? Because it was a proof of his power ; and he adorned my hat with the token of his victory. Ah, woe is me !

Why does this grief constantly return to me ?

*

We women are never alone in nature. This is only another proof of the deep truth that lies in the old tradition. Man, created first, was alone ; but woman, who came afterward, never existed alone. This repeats itself through the history of all nations, and a perplexing mystery is at last revealed to me.

*

In the world of fashion, just as in the park, the traces of footsteps are effaced by obsequious servants. There must be nothing to remind us of yesterday.

And yet their life is to form a part of history.

*

To cease doing evil, is not doing good.

I would like to accomplish some great deed. But where ?

Within myself alone.

*

My little pitchman is quite a changed being when among scenes of nature. He does not love nature. To use his own words, it merely amuses him. He delights in the most trifling peculiarities of bird-life, and how well he knows all the birds !

*

(Many rainy days.)—I long for the sun, and am almost dying for the want of it. I feel as if I were fading, as if perishing with thirst—I cannot live without the sun. It is my debtor for the lovely May days of which I have been deprived. I must have them ; they are my only comfort.

*

If I remain thus dependent upon the weather, permitting every

cloud to darken my mind, and every shower to chill me with the feeling that I am forsaken, it were far better I were lying at the bottom of the lake, and that the boatman were telling those whom he was ferrying across: "Far below us, lies a young maid of honor."—I have once before bade farewell to the sun, and I mean to be independent of it.

*

There are beings who know nothing of rain and sunshine, and yet live.

But there are, also, others who are filled with dew-forming power—but they are the calm, self-contained, powerful natures, whose life is an inner, rather than an outer, one.

*

(June 12th.)—After many hot days, there was rain last night. The drops are still glittering on every leaf and flower. Oh, the delightful morning that has succeeded the nocturnal storm! To have fully enjoyed such a morning is worth the trouble of living.

*

Jochem has a lark in a cage—he must have something shut up with him.

The lark affords me great delight. There are but few of them up here, for we have nothing but meadow land. They love to hover over the fields of grain down in the valley.

*

After the midsummer solstice, the woods become silent. The sun now merely ripens, and has ceased to call forth blossoms and song. The finch alone keeps up his merry lay.

*

From my window, I can see the white foal grazing in the meadow. He knows me. When I look up, he stands still for awhile and looks at me, and then dashes hither and thither at a furious rate. I have named him Wodan, and when I call him by that name, he comes to me.

I have sketched the foal, and am now carving it in birch. I think I shall succeed, but wood is obstinate, awkward stuff, after all. I lose my patience on slight provocation. I must try to overcome this.

*

Yesterday was a year since I lay at the foot of the rock. I could not write a word. My brain whirled with the thoughts of that day; but now it is over.

I do n't think I shall write much more. I have now experienced all the seasons in my new world. The circle is complete. There is nothing new to come from without. I know all that exists about me, or that can happen. I am at home in my new world.

*

Unto Jesus the scribes and pharisees brought a woman who

was to be stoned to death, and he said unto them : " Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone."

Thus it is written.

But I ask : How did she continue to live ? She who was saved from being stoned to death ; she who was pardoned, that is, condemned to live ? How did she live on ? Did she return to her home ? How did she stand with the world ? And how with her own heart ?

No answer. None.

I must find the answer in my own experience.

*

" Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone." These are the noblest, the greatest words ever uttered by human lips, or heard by human ear. They divide the history of the human race into two parts. They are the " let there be light " of the second creation. They divide and heal my little life, too, and create me anew.

*

Has one who is not wholly without sin, a right to offer precepts and reflections to others ?

Look into your own heart. What are you ?

Behold my hands. They are hardened by toil. I have done more than merely lift them in prayer.

*

Since I am alone, I have not seen a letter of print. I have no book and wish for none ; and this is not in order to mortify myself, but because I wish to be perfectly alone.

*

She who renounces the world, and, in her loneliness, still cherishes the thought of eternity, has assumed a heavy burden.

Convent life is not without its advantages. The different voices that join in a chorale sustain each other, and when the tone at last ceases, it seems to float away on the air and vanish by degrees. But here I am quite alone. I am priest and church, organ and congregation, confessor and penitent, all in one ; and my heart is often so heavy, as if I must needs have another to help me bear the load. " Take me up and carry me, I cannot go further ! " cries my soul. But then I rouse myself again, seize my scrip and my pilgrim's staff and wander on, solitary and alone ; and while I wander, strength returns to me.

*

For the first time in a year, I saw a carriage driving up the white road that leads through the valley. Those who were sitting in it, could not know how my eyes followed them. Whither go ye ? who are ye ?

*

I must write again. I believe that I at last know the full mean-

ing of the word "gemüthlich." It includes careful thought for the comfort of others even in the merest trifles, and requires one to put himself in another's place. It is the heart, expressing itself in poetry; it is feeling, clothing itself in the garb of fancy.

True culture includes this feeling; for what is culture but the power to put one's self in another's place, and "to see ourselves as others see us?"

My opinion is still unchanged. Hansei seems dull and awkward, and yet he has far more of the best culture than many a one who is decorated with orders and epaulettes and is regarded as one of the most charming of cavaliers.

*

I constantly keep thinking that there is something in me which I have not yet discovered. It gives me no rest. Is it an idea, a feeling, a word, or a deed? I know not, but I feel that there is something within me that seeks a vent. Perhaps death may come before I discover it.

*

Old Jochem still remembers a few verses from the hymnbook, and keeps repeating them to himself, but in such perverted shape that they are sheer nonsense. I offered to teach him the verses correctly, but this made him very angry and he told me that I was trying to teach him something new, and that it would not answer. His nonsense seems dear to him. He does not understand it, and the air of mystery thus imparted to it renders it far more impressive.

*

One who has never experienced the feeling, cannot know what it is to long for a few words of conversation with your equals. It is a consuming thirst. Any one who can speak my language would serve my purpose. I cannot endure this strain. I feel as if I were in a strange land, and were vainly listening for the beloved accents of my native tongue. It is well for me that I can work.

*

As long as I had Walpurga with me in the palace, I could speak to her freely on various subjects. When I came to her, it was a change, a stepping out of the sphere in which my thoughts were accustomed to move. But here, where I have her and nothing else, it is different. It is not pride—for what have I to do with pride? Is it alienation, or is it sullen listlessness?

*

Naïveté pleases us only for a short time. Wisdom always remains attractive—such wisdom as mother Beate's or Gunther's. Yes, I long for him most of all.

Wisdom is cultured *naïveté* or, to speak more correctly, the *naïveté* of genius. It is the rosy apple; *naïveté*, the blossom from which it sprang, still dwells in the fruit, as its core.

Night and day, the various elemental influences, clear perception and the mysterious forces of nature :—all these help to perfect the finest fruit.

*

I cannot look upon work as the noblest thing in life. The perfect man is he who does nothing, who cherishes himself—; such is the life of the gods, and what is man but the god of creation?

My heresy thus expresses itself. I have confessed and repented of it. But in the confessor's chair sits one who is in the right when he says: "Very well, my child! And so the noblest and most exalted life is simply existence, void of effort. But, since no one can live unless some other being labors for him, it follows that all must do something. Nothing can be had without pay. The one class has not been sent into the world merely to exist, nor the other merely to labor."

*

How happy I might become if there were no past. A life hereafter, filled with memories—how sad the thought! And yet without memories, would it be a second life?

*

True joy at last dwells with us. Whenever we partake of anything, Walpurga always says: "We planted this ourselves; on such a day, we set our beans. I put them in Burgei's hand, and she dropped them on the garden beds."

And thus it seems to be with all things. The past is being renewed to us.

*

I have found it difficult to go over the same task, again and again. But the constant repetition is what constitutes labor. Without that, it is mere amusement.

Nature constantly repeats herself, and we must serve her by imitating her. She repeats herself through her laws; man, through his duties.

I have, nevertheless, indulged in variations, and not without success. While walking through the stable, I observed the cow lowing and turning towards her sucking calf. I have carved the figures in wood.

I should like to imitate every object in nature—to create the world anew, as it were, so that men might see all things as I see them.

I thank Thee, Eternal Spirit, for bestowing these gifts upon me.

*

The chief aim of life is not joy, nor is it repose. It must be labor. Perhaps there is no chief aim, after all.

*

Love and labor are the body and soul of mankind. Happy is he in whom they are united. I have forfeited love—nothing is left me but labor.

*

My white foal! It looks at me, and I look at it in return. Free and uncontrolled, it scampers about the field, and yet I seize it and send it out into the world, so that others, too, may delight in the pretty, playful animal.

I have sketched it in various positions. Its every movement is replete with strength and grace.

*

I have carved the figure of my white foal, and have completed it with incredible rapidity. My friends are astonished, and so am I. I look upon it as a success.

My little pitchman—Why should I dislike to mention it?—carried the figure down to the dealer. It grieved me to part with my work, but the little magic horse must, and does, support me. It was sold at a good price, and I received a large order, besides.

*

Sometimes, I find myself wondering what Countess Brinkenstein, pious Constance, Schnabelsdorf, or Bronnen, would say, if they were to see me now; and at such moments, I am obliged to look around, in order to satisfy myself that they are not present.

So long as I cannot govern my imagination, I am not free. Fancy is the most powerful of despots.

*

Our fountain gushes and bubbles the whole night through, and when the moonlight rests upon it, it is lovelier and more peaceful than ever. The earth bounteously gives forth its healing waters. They flow unceasingly. All that we need do is to go to the spring and drink. My favorite seat is near there. Its waters sometimes suddenly increase in volume and swiftness, as if they were bringing me a special message. Perhaps it is all caused by the currents of air, and I may be mistaken after all. One easily gives way to reverie when by the spring.

*

Gundel, the little pitchman's daughter, affords me much pleasure. The honest, kind-hearted, simple-minded creature is now full of joy; she loves, and is loved in return.

One of the farm hands is a native of Hansei's birthplace. He was once in the cuirassiers, and this faithful, but rough and ill-favored lad is Gundel's lover. A girl whom no one has noticed, whose life has been constant drudgery, is invested with new importance, both in her own eyes and in those of others, as soon as she becomes the object of a man's love. All that she does is regarded as good and pretty, and she is at once lifted up out of her lowly and forgotten state.

Love is the crown of every life, a diadem even on the lowliest head.

When Gundel goes about her rough work—to draw water, or to feed the cattle—she seems radiant with new-born happiness.

Although I have said nothing, she notices that I am interested in her, and she often asks whether there is anything she can do for me.

I wish that riches were again mine, so that I might make these lovers happy.

*

How foolish is the desire to be ever original. Nature constantly repeats herself. The rose of to-day is like that of yesterday.

Men determine for themselves—and in this lies their torment.

*

I have not yet put vanity away from me. I am still moved to delight whenever a happy expression flows from my pen. But is this really vanity? I think not. Although alone in my cell, I adorn myself for my own sake. Beauty has become a necessity to me. I must be surrounded by objects of beauty, and must also possess it in myself. Uncouthness does not offend me, but ugliness affects me just as discords do. In the so-called cultivated world, a rude expression excites a deprecatory "Ah!" while elegant vulgarity is smiled upon.

*

I am obliged to read old Jochem's bond to him, at least once a week. Although he knows it by heart, he insists upon hearing it again and satisfying himself that it is all right, and properly signed and sealed. He does not suffer it to leave his hands. I am obliged to read it while he holds it. He trusts no one.

The old man almost seems to regret that he has nothing to complain of, and is constantly urging me to prepare a memorial to the king, so that he may have it at hand when required. How strange that the king should always seem to him the personification of right and justice.

He has much to tell me about the late king, under whom he served. He describes him as a perfect gentleman, and says that he often hunted in this region. He has been informed that the present king is not much of a hunter, and that he sticks to the priests, who, in return, grant him absolution. He always concludes by asking whether I have ever seen the king, and, although I have answered "No" a hundred times, he keeps on repeating the same question.

*

Hansei was right, after all! I feel as if I ought to crave his pardon. It is a disgusting sight to behold the old pensioner at his meals; and if one does not intend to have him at table for the remainder of his life, one had better not begin with him. Hansei's objection was kind and clever, not rude and ill-natured. Kind resolves that cannot be fully carried out, had better not be attempted.

When I spoke of this to Walpurga to-day, she answered me, through her tears, saying: "I'd a thousand times rather hear you praise him than me."

*

It is not until humanity becomes a duty that we can truly know whether its exercise is a pleasure or a sacrifice.

Naturally enough, I have treated Jochem kindly, have often had him visit me, and have tried to entertain him. Now he will not leave me to myself, and robs me of my only possession—solitude. Although it cost me an effort, I was obliged to insist upon his only visiting me during certain hours. But even that is irksome, for I am no longer perfect mistress of my time. When the bell in the valley tolls the hour of twelve, the old man comes and sits with me. Our conversations are not very fruitful or suggestive. His stock of ideas is but a limited one, and topics that are not related to them fail to excite his interest. Besides that, he coughs a great deal, and is always asking me to tell him about my father. He seems to forget that I have already told him that I never knew my father. It was the saddest thing I ever said, but I did not know my father while he lived. I understood him not, although he attempted to reveal himself to me. From the depths of my soul, I cry out to him: "My poor father! you tried to perfect yourself, but your last action, although it was meant to arouse me, was the act of one who was in fetters. I now accomplish what you falteringly began. While laboring for you, my love for you has become full and complete. You are now near to me, and have become what you longed to be—my preserver."

*

I have at last made it a rule that the old man shall only come when I send for him. I could not do otherwise. And this I find almost worse than to have fixed hours for his visits, for now I am often obliged to stop and ask myself: "Is n't it time to call the old man? He won't disturb me now." He thus engages my thoughts more than before.

I must learn to bear with him patiently, and Jochem will surely improve. When I say to him: "I can't talk now," he is satisfied. All that he asks is to be permitted to sit there in silence.

*

How well one sleeps when tired with work. How good it is to have hunger and fatigue, when one is able to satisfy their demands.

In the great world, they eat and sleep, but are never tired or hungry.

I never knew how much I used to talk, and how necessary conversation had become to me. But now that I have learned how to be silent, and live alone with my own thoughts, I do know. I now see that the presence of others exerted an electric influence upon me, overcharging my nature. I was never unreal, but was more than I really am. I made others cheerful, but how rarely was I so!

*

Labor is the consoling friend and companion of solitude.

He who has not lived alone, does not know what labor is.

*

I am often reminded of Dante's: "There can be no greater suffering than, in one's misery, to remember happier days." But why does he not tell us what kind of happiness he means? It must always be delightful to remember innocent joys, though the unhappiness that follows be ever so great.

But Francesca refers to happiness allied with guilt. And I know that she is right.

I still remember my father's parting advice: "Indulge only in such pleasures as it will afford you pleasure to look back upon."

*

What strange, hidden springs flow through one's soul. Ever since the sad saying of Dante's occurred to me, all my thoughts have been translating themselves into Italian.

*

It often seems to me as if it were sinful thus to bury myself alive. My voice is no longer heard in song, and much more that dwells within me has become mute.

Is this right?

If my only object in life were to be at peace with myself, it would be well enough—but I long to labor and to do something for others. Yet where and what shall it be?

*

When I first heard that the beautifully carved furniture of the great and wealthy is the work of prisoners, it made me shudder. And now, although I am not deprived of freedom, I am in much the same condition. Those who have disfigured life should, as an act of expiation, help to make life more beautiful for others. The thought that I am doing this comforts and sustains me.

*

My work prospers. But last winter's wood is not yet fit for use. My little pitchman has brought me some that is old, excellent and well seasoned, having been part of the rafters of an old house that has just been torn down. We work together cheerfully, and our earnings are considerable.

*

Vice is the same everywhere, except that here it is more open. Among the masses, vice is characterized by coarseness; among the upper classes, by meanness.

The latter shake off the consequences of their evil deeds, while the former are obliged to bear them.

*

The rude manners of these people are necessary, and are far preferable to polite deceit. They must needs be rough and rude. If it were not for its coarse, thick bark, the oak could not withstand the storm.

I have found that this rough bark covers more tenderness and sincerity than does the smoothest surface.

*

Jochem told me, to-day, that he is still quite a good walker, but that a blind man finds it very troublesome to go anywhere; for, at every step, he is obliged to grope about, so that he may feel sure of his ground before he firmly plants his foot on the earth.

Is it not the same with me? Am I not obliged to be sure of the ground before I take a step?

Such is the way of the fallen.

Ah! why does everything I see or hear become a symbol of my life?

*

Our life here is like that of plants. Our chief care is as to the weather. Rain and sunshine affect us as they do the plants that require their aid. Hansei often complains that he does not understand the weather signs hereabouts. In his old home by the lake, he could always tell how the weather would be. His want of knowledge on this subject prevents him from feeling quite at home here. Our little pitchman, however, is a most reliable weather-prophet and has thus come to be looked upon as quite an important personage. I am his docile scholar and he is quite proud of me. Although he is quite intimate with me, and often indulges in pleasantries, he never fails to treat me with great respect.

Those who know nothing of etiquette, often make up for the want of it by their tact. I congratulated the little pitchman last week. It was on the occasion of his birthday, and when I shook hands with him, his face grew scarlet. He thanked me heartily, and kept saying that when he got to heaven, he would bespeak good quarters for me, and that his old woman would n't get angry if he possessed both her and myself in the next world. He is always happy when serving me. When he builds a fire in my stove, he ogles every log, as if it ought to feel it an honor to be permitted to help keep me warm.

*

The census troubled me greatly to-day. After dinner, Hansei produced the blank which he was required to fill, and handed it to Walpurga, with the words: "Do you write, or let her"—meaning me—"write her name, her age, and where she comes from?"

We were in great tribulation, until Walpurga, at last, solved the difficulty by saying that there was no need of telling everything.

The remark was quite opportune and afforded a convenient excuse to Hansei, who was greatly annoyed by another schedule, in which he was expected to state the annual yield of milk and of butter, the number of chickens on the farm, etc., etc. Hansei was angry at the officials, and felt quite sure that they meant to impose another tax. His wrath saved me, but defrauded the state out of one soul.

The people hereabouts look upon the state and its functionaries as their natural enemies, and have no scruples as to deceiving them.

*

For the first time in my life, I have seen a tree felled.

I was filled with awe when I saw it topple for a moment, before the final crash. It reminded me of the fate of a man who is, at one blow, hurled from sunny heights into the depths of misery.

Hansei is having a path cut through the forest. It passes by my window, and the clearing will afford me a fine view. He was quite happy when I told him of this.

*

Hansei was at the capital. On his return, he unwrapped a large parcel and, with conscious pride, showed us what sensible presents he had bought. They were the pictures of the king and queen.

In his kindness of heart, he offered to let me hang up the pictures in my room, and was quite provoked to find that his wife wanted to keep them for herself. I satisfied him at last by saying: "The sitting-room belongs to us all."

But the pictures seemed to be looking at me constantly, and made it unpleasant for me to remain in the room. Walpurga noticed this and, to my great relief, removed them to her bedroom. Hansei does not take notice of such matters.

The king's portrait represents him in the dress of a citizen. Is it a sign that—?

*

Hansei at last reveals his plan. It is quite a clever stroke of his to begin by cutting roads through the forest, so that the beams can be brought down from far up the mountain, and thus fetch him thrice as much money as if they were cut into smaller logs.

*

(April 3rd.)—At first, there is so much to observe. The whole world seems like a young child, or like the first verdure of spring. Later, one grows accustomed to it all, and it seems as if things were always and everywhere alike. It seems to me that life would be insupportable, if the world were ever new and left us no repose.

Habit, our second mother, is a good mother, too.

*

They have fastened a rope to the feet of my white foal, so that it cannot run away. It can now only move about slowly. The freedom and grace of its movements are gone, even before it is put in harness.

Oh, how many human beings have a like fate!

*

I love to watch the rain calmly descending upon the earth. If I were not obliged to work, I could remain by my window for hours, lost in reverie and looking out and listening, for it seems to me as if

I were endowed with a million eyes and could see every drop as it falls on the half-open buds. But here, we are all constantly at work. I am ashamed to sit here with my hands in my lap. The rain, in springtime, is soft and beautiful, lending voice, form and substance to the air, and to every tiny rill.

Formerly, I always required a spyglass, where I no longer need it. It is because we do not live in the open air, that we become near-sighted.

The rose may be improved by cultivation, and the thorns growing on its stalk may become different from what they were; but they are thorns, nevertheless.

(April 15th.)—I have heard the yellow-hammer, for the first time this year. In springtime, its notes are far more rapid and short than in summer.

(April 23d.)—The first swallow has come. Now may we softly lull ourselves to rest in the consciousness that sweet spring is with us once again. The uncertain and anxious fluttering from one fair day to another, is at an end.

My little pitchman says: "Swallows and starlings come and go in the night." The idea is quite suggestive.

(End of April.)—We have had a shower. Oh, what fragrant odors it awakened in flowers, grass and trees! And this fragrance floats off into infinite space, while we short-lived children of man imagine that it all exists for us. Everything that exists, exists for itself alone.

The *immortelle* is one of the earliest plants to shoot forth its leaves. It grows by the edge of the forest and will thrive even in poor soil.

(May 1st.)—We have had a cold, rainy day with hail. Towards evening, when the rain had ceased and the drops on the trees and bushes sparkled in the golden sunlight, I heard the cuckoo, for the first time this year. He flew from forest to forest, from mountain to mountain, crying everywhere.

I now know why they say: "Go to the cuckoo."* The cuckoo has no nest, no home of its own and, according to popular tradition, is obliged to sleep on a different tree every night. "Go to the cuckoo," therefore means: "be restless and fugitive; be at home nowhere."

When I told the grandmother of my discovery, she said:

* "Geh zum Kukuk!"

"You've hit it exactly. You manage to get some good out of everything. You've won it."

She meant that I had won the game of life.

*

My kind little pitchman has given me an unexpected treat. He has arranged a seat for me, up by the maple tree on the projecting rock. But he cut away the bushes, and thus destroyed the privacy of my favorite haunt. Nevertheless, I find it pleasant to sit there. No human being is perfectly satisfied with what another may do for him, but we may be grateful, for all; and gratitude is the soil on which joy thrives.

*

(First Sunday in May.)—On Sunday afternoons, when I may not work, I long to drive through the park in a caleche which is easy on its springs; not to be always walking or obliged to be doing something. To move through the world in the springtime, seated on soft cushions and drawn by fleet horses, or, what is still better, to ride along the turfy forest paths, while guiding and controlling a strong power—I can never forget that.

*

At night, when I look up into the vast, starry vault, with its myriad glittering orbs, I find it difficult to sit or to walk. I think of the nights when, lying back in my carriage, I drove out into the wide world and looked up at the stars. How free everything was then!

I am still much affected by trifles.

*

There are days when I cannot endure the forest, when I do not wish for shade. I must then have the sun—nothing but light and sunshine. At such times, I walk along the hot and shadeless meadow paths.

*

I now have a window-shelf filled with flower pots. How different when one has to wait for the flowers to come up, instead of receiving them in full bloom from the gardener.

*

The evenings are my enemy—always heavy and dull. Morn is my friend, for then everything is bright. How different it once was!

*

The mental state of those who are out in the world may be likened to the physical condition of Baroness Constance. There is a constant ringing in her ears, and she knows nothing of holy repose or perfect silence. It is not until one ceases to know anything of the world, or to care for it, that this mental ringing in the ears ceases, and holy repose and calm are vouchsafed us. Every sound which then enters is as a marvel.

*

The grandmother is quiet and alert, just as occasion may require. She is not one of the ever busy and excited ones, and yet she is never idle. With her great knowledge of human nature, she yet retains her kindly feelings towards all. She has thought much and yet is *naïve*. She treats me with affectionate frankness, and says that she has, all her life, wished to have a clever person about her—one who had learnt something and with whom she could talk about everything. And she does this to the letter. I am obliged to explain a thousand things to her, and she is sincerely grateful for any information I can give her.

"I like to get my kindling-wood ready in time," said she to-day. Translated into our language, this means that she likes to think over things beforehand.

But there are so many dark doors which we pass with closed eyes.

*

While watching the foal to-day, I could not help thinking that the first man who tamed a beast—that is, subdued it so that it would bear him and support him—was the first to assert the power of humanity. Other animals can kill each other, but not one of them can guide another life to its own advantage. There are no new species of beasts to be tamed now. Men are, in truth, becoming poets. They condense the intangible forces and say to steam, to light, and to the electric spark: "Come and do my bidding."

*

I have bought some sugar with which to feed my white foal. It is a great pleasure, and to-day I could not help thinking that, if any one saw us, it must have been a pretty picture.

Oh, how vain and trifling I still am!

*

Every large and extended estate, be it this very farm, or the court at the capital, has its vassals, its servants, its parasites, its willing subjects. The world is the same everywhere.

*

Peasant life is not the elegant world, but there must be plough horses as well as carriage horses.

*

To live out of one's self, to give full sway to one's native temperament, to remain unmoved by external influences:—thus may one learn to know himself and that which is highest. It is in the desert waste that God reveals himself to the individual heart. The bush burns and yet is not consumed.

*

Whenever I look at the mountains, I am impressed anew with their sublimity.

The world below me is covered by a sea of mist, from which the mountain peaks here and there protrude. With every day, as it were, I behold the first day of creation.

I am beginning to understand the idea of the sublime. It is the awe of greatness, not the awe of fear. I feel as if dwelling in a temple.

*

Solitude often makes one dull and torpid. I sometimes experience this even in myself.

On a rainy Sunday, Hansei will often stand looking out of the window, for hours at a time. I feel satisfied that his first thoughts are of a horse, a cow, the sale of his wood, or of some acquaintance. At last, he falls into a sort of waking dream, and thinks of nothing at all. One awakes from this childlike lying down and gazing into the world, as from strengthening and refreshing sleep. It is indeed only another form of elementary existence.

*

Judging by my notes, I, at one time, thought this merely a station in my journey, where one is detained by interest or adventure; but now I see that I am at the goal.

I will lay down my load, as the grandmother advised me to do, and break the chests to pieces. I shall remain here for the rest of my life. And now that I have firmly resolved to remain—even if I were discovered to-morrow, and the whole world heaped its scorn upon me—I have a happy feeling of being at home. I am here and here I shall remain.

I was not reminded of all this until to-day, when my little pitchman said: "You look so pleased, so—I do n't know how, but—you never looked so before."

Yes, my dear little pitchman, you are right; it was not until to-day that I felt myself truly at home. I have struck root, like the cherry sapling before my window.

*

The old pensioner said to me to-day: "Behold, my child, age takes much from us; but I can still dream as beautifully as I did in my youth."

*

Of all the flowers, I find the heaviest dew on the rose. Is that because of the rich perfume? Does the perfume form dew? No green leaf ever has so much dew on it, as the leaf of a flower.

*

I often feel tempted to tell the story of Leah to the whole household, Jochem included.

It often annoys me, when I think that I do not impart all I have to my friends; but how much more it would annoy me, if I were misunderstood by them.

Even in our day, art and religion are far asunder.

The latter can be imparted to all; the former cannot.

*

It is impossible to interest the masses in refined pleasures. Dur-

ing the week, they have nothing but hard work; and on Sunday, they find recreation at ninepins, or in dancing in heavy boots. They require rude pleasures and a rude faith.

*

(On Sunday, while the bells are ringing.)—Art does not enter into the life of the masses. For them, plastic or dramatic art, or the higher order of music or literature, do not exist.

The only idea they have of another life, over and above the trivial present, is embodied by the church, and yet that which is best in all religions is the poetry they contain.

*

What must become of one who, for years, does not read a serious book, or does not read at all, and thus takes in no great or well worked out ideas? If he be rich and noble, his life becomes vain play; if he be poor and lowly, it becomes vain labor. And, for this reason, nature has given us song and history, has established religion which offers its jewels to all, so that every one may drink of the fermented wine of all knowledge and all art. But new wine must always be added, or—

*

(July 30th.)—The whole world was veiled in mist, and the sun was hidden from view. It seemed as if the artistic creative eye were brooding over the form it was about to usher into life. And then the cloud-flakes were rent asunder. For a moment, the mountain world was free. The mists disappear; but new ones arise from the earth.

*

Out in the world, the fear of being ridiculed prevents people from expressing enthusiastic admiration of moonlight. When the whole world is illumined by its soft glow, and no sound is heard save the murmur of the sparkling brook, I am filled with ecstatic delight.

*

Temptation returns, and says: "You offend against nature by wasting your rich gifts on tasks that others could accomplish as well as you. Go out into the world, and consider your present life merely as a state of transition."

No! I shall remain!

When I stand on the mountain and gaze out into the world, I often ask myself: "Art thou still the same Irma? What vestige is left of thy past glittering life?"

Nothing but the heavy burden that oppresses my soul.

*

Weather-talk is considered a bore, and yet there is no subject more important. Plants and animals feel the changes, for they determine their fate from day to day. And are there not men whose whole life is bound up in the question: Will the day be clear or cloudy?

The cloud that, like a girdle, encircles yonder peak, has rested there, motionless, the whole day; and thus, too, there are days when a mist seems to be resting upon one's soul, enveloping our inner being in darkness.

*

Play of the features is distinctively a human attribute. The human face reveals changing emotions; that of the beast does not.

The beast, moreover, has always but one and the same tone. The bark of a dog is ever the same, be it in joy or anger; the only change is in the tempo. Or is it only to our ears that these tones seem alike?

*

If a human being were to utter such inharmonious and disconnected tones as those produced by the mavis overhead, it would drive me to distraction. But why do these tones not affect me in the same way? Why do they almost please me? Because they are natural to the bird. But man, having the power to choose, must see to it that his tones are melodious.

*

What is all our knowledge? We do not even know what tomorrow's weather will be. There is no infallible indicator of the changes in this most essential condition of life. Nor do the farmers, although they are so fond of talking on the subject, know anything about it.

*

Harvest time is the dramatic turning point of the year. At that time, all is haste and suspense, and men and women are alike uncongenial.

*

One need but listen to the pensioner, to learn how thoroughly corrupt the world is. His expletives have all the force of cudgels. He is constantly trying to sound me in regard to Hansei and Walpurga, and would like me to tell him of their faults. It worries him to hear them well spoken of.

*

A remark of Gunther's occurred to me to-day.

"We are all passionate; the difference between individuals being only a difference in rhythm. He who goes down stairs at one bound, may break his neck; he whose descent is gradual and careful, will remain uninjured."

*

I never look at the clock. With me, life is no longer divided into hours. I hear the bell in the valley at morning, noon and evening, and regulate my actions accordingly. The clock is in the church tower. The church tells us the time of day.

*

Old Jochem is ill. The physician who attends him is quite a jovial

character, and maintains that Jochem would live many years longer if he had only been able to feed his anger and keep his lawsuits, for these furnished him with excitement and amusement, at the same time. As long as he had these, there was still something left to fight for in the world and some one to abuse, and it was this that had kept him up. Now that his life was a peaceful one, he would, in all likelihood, die of ennui.

"You smile," said the physician to me. "Believe me, I am quite serious. An infant in the cradle that does not cry, and a chained dog that does not bark, have neither life nor energy and will surely die."

He may be right, to a certain extent.

I feel under restraint when with the physician; for he regards me with such a strange, scrutinizing air.

"Oh, Thou good God! The grass is coming up! But they'll bury me in the earth and I'll never come up again!" was Jochem's lament.

*

The old man is dead. This very night he passed away in his sleep. No one was with him at the time.

He died like a forest tree which has lost its power of absorbing nourishment.

Little Burgei now sleeps with me. My friends will listen to nothing else, and will not suffer me to be alone at night.

*

I am filled with dread. A corpse lies on the floor above. Beside it, is a solitary lamp that is left to burn until the dead man is buried. And yet I feel that I must conquer this feeling of dread! Yes, I shall.

It still moves me deeply to think of how the old man remembered me. He sent for me yesterday; and, when I went up to his bedside, he said: "Irmgard, you were a stranger and yet were kind to me—I'd like to leave you something. I've been thinking the matter over and find that I still have something to give you. It's the best of all that I own. It would do me no good to have it buried with me, and it will be of great benefit to you, for there's a charm in it. Here it is—take it—it's the bullet that struck me on the third rib. Take good care of it. He who bears with him a bullet that has once hit a man, is in no danger of sudden, unexpected death. You can rely on that! And now I've something to ask you: Tell me, what was your father's name? You've told me that he's dead. When I get to heaven, I'll hunt him up and tell him that you're quite a good girl; a little bit queer perhaps, but right good for all. I'll tell your father that, and it'll be good news for him."

I could not tell him the name—How could I? All I could do was to thank him for giving me what had been so precious in his own eyes. And, strange to say, when I take the bullet in my hand and look at it, it agitates me greatly.

I will now prepare myself to follow the old man to his grave.

*

I was at the churchyard while the old man was buried. I shall lie there, too, some day.

*

I feel as if death might be conquered by the will. I am determined to live; I will not die. Is force of will the hidden thing within me, that I am ever seeking? And yet, I have no will. No one has. All our life, all our thoughts, are simply the necessary result of events and experiences, of waking perception and nocturnal dreams. Like the beasts, we may change the scene; but, the greater one, the prison that confines us, we cannot change. We cannot quit the earth. The laws of gravitation and attraction hold our souls fast as well as our bodies. Far above me, move the stars, and I am nothing more than a flower or a blade of grass clinging to the earth. The stars look down at me, and I look up to them, and yet we cannot join each other.

*

A reigning prince has visited our farm. His highness Grubersepp, of whom Walpurga has often spoken to me, has arrived, bringing his little son, or—to speak more correctly—his two black horses and his son with him. The house is all bustle, and every one seems as proud and happy as if a reigning prince had actually come.

Grubersepp looked at me with a curious air.

“Is that prim-looking girl,” said he to Hansei, while pointing backwards with his thumb, “one of your wife’s relations?”

“Yes; my wife—” Hansei muttered something—I saw that it went hard with him to tell a lie, and, above all, to the great farmer to whom he was showing his property.

Among the peasants, it is just the same as elsewhere. Only the great ones know each other. But their intercourse is beautiful and impressive, and, although they exchange no friendly words, they serve each other by friendly actions.

The family have been made happy, for Grubersepp has said that the farm was in good order; and when Grubersepp says that, it is as much as if the intendant should say: “divine.”

During the two days Grubersepp spent here, there was no rest in the house; that is, every one was busy thinking of him. Now everything is running in its accustomed groove, and every face is radiant with joy. No matter how well satisfied one may be with himself, it is something quite different to receive words of approval from the lips of another, and especially so, when the words of commendation come from a man so exalted as Grubersepp.

*

I am still trembling with fright. I was in the woods to-day. I was sitting on my bench, and saw some one walking among the

trees. Now and then he would stop to gather a flower or pick up a stone. He came near and—who was it?

It was Gunther, the friend for whose presence I had so often longed. He asked me, in his deep, clear voice: "Child, does this road lead down to the village?"

I felt as if choking, and could not utter a word. I pointed to the footpath and, in fear and trembling, arose from my seat. He asked me: "Are you dumb, poor child?"—This saved me. I am dumb; I cannot speak. Without uttering a word, I fled from him and, when I found myself alone, I wept longer than I have for many years. I wanted to hurry after him, but he had gone. I could not support myself. My limbs gave way under me. At last I am calm—all is over—all must be over.

*

I have had long and troubled days. My work did not go as smoothly as it should have done, and much went amiss with me. The world without has aroused me.

*

I thank fate that I have learned to use my eyes. Wherever I look, I see something that delights me and gives me food for thought. The noblest joys and the most widely diffused, are those the eye affords us.

*

I am delighted to find that the little pitchman knows every bird by its song. The proverb says: "A bird is known by its feathers." That is a matter of course, for few know them by their song. Their plumage is permanent; their song is fleeting and fitful. The former is fixed; the latter is not.

*

I now listen, with perfect unconcern, to the groaning of the forest trees, which so alarmed me during that night of terrors. And how strange! as soon as a bird begins to sing, the groaning ceases. What causes this?

*

I have received fresh orders, and am all right again. But my little pitchman keeps ailing. At first, it almost vexed me, but I conquered the selfish habits that tyrannized over me. I have served him faithfully, in requital for the services he has done me. I nursed him carefully, and now he is quite well again.

I am not so selfish, after all; for I have gained the friendship of good human beings. But I cannot do good to those who do not concern me. I belong to myself and to an infinitely small circle; beyond that I cannot go.

*

When I sit here in silence and solitude, and look at the one room in which I live and hope to die, I sometimes give way to horrible fits of depression. Here is my chair, my table, my workbench, my

bed. These are mine until I am laid in the grave ; but there is not one human soul that belongs to me.

I feel so oppressed, at such moments, that I would like to cry out aloud, and it is with difficulty that I regain my composure. Work, however, aids me.

*

For one brief hour, I have imagined myself possessed of omniscience.

It was yesterday morning, during the hour from eleven until twelve. A light sun-shower passed over us, and then all grew bright again, and, in my mind's eye, I saw how thousands of beings were spending that hour. I saw the laborer in the forest, the king in his cabinet, the sewing-woman in her garret, the miner in the shaft, the bird on the tree, the lizard on the rock. I saw the child sitting in school, and the dying old man drawing his last breath. I saw the ship, the coquette rouging herself, and the poor working-women weeding in the fields. I saw all—everything. I passed one hour of infinity.

And now I am fettered again—a small, isolated, miserable, stammering child. The one great thought of eternity passes like a fugitive through my mind, and finds no resting-place there. I must again hold fast to trifles.

I shall return to my workbench.

I have read, somewhere, that the Arabians wash their hands before prayer; when in the desert, where they can find no water, they wash them in sand and dust. The dust of labor purifies us.

*

The masses should have no books, but should talk with, and listen to, each other.

Books serve to isolate man ; that which is told us by word of mouth is far more potent.

*

The teachings—or, rather, the experiences—of a ruined worldling have two things in their favor. She who has gone astray has become observant of everything, and is, therefore, the best guide. And, besides that, it seems to me that those who receive a precept from the lips of one who is perfectly pure have no choice left them ; for purity is the highest authority, and its teachings must be accepted. But when a ruined being speaks to us, every word must be tested. It will not do to reject it at once ; and this is well, for it makes one free.

*

The swallows are departing. They gather in flocks which, like thick clouds, darken the air and, with lightning speed, they move in their zig-zag course. How they can keep together in such irregular movements passes our comprehension. When, or by what means, do they signify to each other when a sharp turn is to be taken ?

The thought of flying suggests a sphere of life of which we can form no conception. And yet we imagine that we understand the world. What is fixed, we may comprehend; at least, the portion that is fixed.—Beyond that, all is conjecture.

*

I overheard Franz, Gundel's lover, saying to her: "A woman who looked just like Irmgard was once with the queen at the military manœuvres; and she wore the uniform of our regiment, and rode up and down the line."

If the soldier were to recognize and betray me?

How the confused feelings that fill the human heart seem to play at hide and seek with each other. With all my misery, it is not without a certain feeling of triumph that I learn that my image has impressed itself on a thousand memories.

*

I have not yet accustomed myself to go out alone, and it often seems to me as if a servant must be walking after me. Ah! what an artificial life we all lead.

I have spent a whole day alone in the woods. Oh, how happy I was! I lay on the ground listening to the rustling of the leaves overhead, and the prattling of the brook below. If I could but end my days here like a wounded doe—for I am one, and drops of blood mark my track.—No, I am well again. I was once in the world; that is, in another world; and now I lead a new life.

*

The little pitchman knew my father. During one summer, he worked in our forest, gathering pitch, and my father, who understood everything, went up to him and taught him how to boil the pitch in order to obtain a better and purer article than he would otherwise have got.

"Oh, what a man he was! I only wish you'd known him," said the little pitchman to me. "He was so good. Many a one has told me, since then, how he used to help everybody. He knew all about everything. He taught me that you can get the best turpentine from the larches. He never liked to give anything to people, but he was n't stingy. He helped all who'd work, and showed them how things might be done with less trouble and with greater profit, and that was better than giving them money. Every year he would lend them some money, so that they could buy a pig, and when they'd sold it, they had to pay him back. They often laughed at him and gave him a nickname, too, but it was an honor to him. Yes—and would you believe it?—he had a great misfortune. His children deserted him."

How these words rent my heart!

During the whole evening, the terrible mark on my forehead burned like fire.

*

This is the anniversary of my return to the summer palace.

At that time, I dreamt that a star had fallen down on me, and that a man, with averted gaze, was saying: "Thou, too, art alone!"

There are depths of the soul, which no safety-lamp ever enters, and where all light is extinguished. I turn away—for naught dwells there but the angry storm-wind.

*

My thoughts go back to my childhood. I was three years old when my mother died. I have nothing to remind me of it, except that the moving about and pushing in the next room greatly frightened me. Oh mother! why did you die so soon? How different I would have been—

I? Who is this I? If it could have been different, it were not I. It was to be thus.

They put black clothes on me and my brother, and I only remember that father went with us. He said that it would be better if we did not remain with him, and that it was not well for us to grow up in solitude. He kissed us at parting. He kissed me and my brother; then he kissed me once more. It seemed as if he wished to retain my kiss for the last.

What are the memories of my childhood? A silent convent, my aunt the lady abbess, and my friend Emma. I remember this much, however: when strangers came, they would turn to me and say: "Oh, what a pretty child! what large brown eyes!" Emma told me that I was not pretty, and that the visitors were only laughing at and mocking me; but my mirror told me that I was pretty. I frankly said so to Emma and she confessed that I was. My father came—he had been in America—and he looked at me for a long while. "Father, I am pretty; am I not?" said I to him.

"Yes, my child, you are, and much is required of one who is beautiful. Beauty is a heavy charge. Always bear yourself so that others may justly feel proud of you."

I did not know what he meant at the time, but now I understand it all.

I do not remember how the years passed by. I went back to father. Bruno, who was intended for an agriculturist, entered the army against father's wishes. Father, absorbed by his work and his studies, lived entirely for himself, and left us to do as we pleased. He was proud of this and often said that he did not wish to exercise his authority over us, and that he meant to allow us to develop our characters freely and without restraint. I returned to the convent, and remained there until my aunt died.

And there—forgive me, great and pure spirit!—there lay your great error. You cast aside your paternal majesty and meant to live in love alone. And we? Bruno would not, and I could not. And thus, while you were lonely, we were miserable.

Bruno went to court. He was handsome, gay, and full of life. He presented me at court, also. Father had allowed me to follow my own choice, and there my troubles began. I knew that I was beautiful, and I had the courage to think differently from others. I had become the free nature which my father had meant me to be ; but to what purpose ?

*

When I look over what I have written, I cannot help thinking of how much one has lived and labored during a year, and how small the yield is, after all. But then flowers, too, require a long time before they blossom, and fruit ripens but slowly ; many sunny days and dewy nights have helped to perfect them.

*

A rainbow ! Rest and peace are intangible. They exist nowhere except in our own imagination and in the view we take of things around us. Now I understand why the rainbow that followed the deluge was described as a token of peace. The seven colors have no real existence. They only appear to the eye that receives the broken rays at the proper angle of refraction. Rest and peace cannot be conquered by force ; they are free gifts of the heaven within us—smiles and tears meeting like the rain cloud and the sunshine.

*

I am often oppressed with a fear that I shall lose what culture I possess, because of my having no one with whom I can speak in my own language, and—I hardly know how to express myself—in whom I can find my own nature reflected. And yet, that which makes man human is possessed by those about me, as much as by the most cultured. This being the case, whence this fear ? and of what benefit is culture ? Do I still mean to use it in the world ? I do not understand myself.

Our fashionable culture cannot supplant religion, because, while religion makes all men equal, education produces inequality. But there must be a system of culture that will equalize all men, and that is the only right and true system. We are, as yet, at the threshold.

*

I have a great work before me, and am determined to succeed. Hansei put little Peter on the white horse and let him ride a few steps. How happy the little fellow was ! and how Wodan looked around at father and son ! I retained the scene in my memory, and am now working at the group—Hansei, Peter, and the white foal, all together. If I only succeed ! I can scarcely sleep for thinking of it.

*

The group has proved a success, although not so great a one as I had wished for. The human figures are stiff and without expres-

sion ; but the horse is full of life, and every one in the house is delighted with my achievement.

Hansei wishes me to accompany him when he goes out hunting, so that I may copy stags, deer and chamois. Those, he thinks, are the best subjects after all.

*

I have tried to copy the animals in the forest, but did not succeed as I did with the horse. I can only hold fast to that which has no fear of me and which I, therefore, love. I shall stick to my horses and cows.

*

All the mountain summits that I see, have such strange and yet appropriate names. Who bestowed them upon them ? And who accepted them ? What names could we invent nowadays ? The earth and language have both become rigid and unyielding. I think I once heard the same thought expressed one evening, while we were at tea with the queen.

*

The carnival is a great festival—the very realization of jollity. Peasants from the village come to visit us. They often come on Sundays, but I have never heard them speak of anything but cattle, the crops, or the price of grain. I sometimes remain in the room to listen to them, for I love to hear the sound of human voices.

The stories they tell each other seem simple, but, after all, none better are told in the *salon*.

*

Why did I not live out my life in purity ? I was intended for a noble and beautiful existence.

*

My white foal is running about, while I sit here modeling it. The power of giving permanent shape to impressions received by the eye is the prerogative of man alone. We have words for everything about us and can imitate all objects, and, over and above that, we have music and pure thought. What rich stores of knowledge and delight are at man's disposal.

*

We have passed three sad, sorrowful days. The grandmother was ill. The whole household was in alarm. Hansei feared the worst and did not venture to leave the farm. It was a comfort to me to find that my nursing did the grandmother so much good.

*

Hansei, proud as he is of being a great farmer, was so anxious to do something for the mother, that he chopped the wood with which to make a fire in her room, and carried it in, himself.

*

He always told the doctor to spare no expense. Nothing was too dear, or too good for the grandmother.

The doctor explained the grandmother's illness to me, just as if I were a physician.

She often sent Uncle Peter out into the woods to me. It was still raw out there, and we soon returned.

The grandmother is well again and is sitting in the spring sunshine.

"Yes, one must have been out of the world, to be grateful for coming back again," said she. "One who does n't get away does n't know what it is to come back." She had much to tell me about the deaths of her five children. "This one would have been so old, and this one so old," she kept on saying. In imagination, they had grown up with her. Then she told me of her husband's death: how he had been dragged into the lake by the driftwood, and drowned; and how Hansei had remained with them afterward. "He was a strange man," she always said of her husband, "but good-hearted."

During his sister's illness, the little pitchman was in great despair.

"She was the pride of our family," he kept on saying, as if she were already dead. But now he is the happiest of us all, and when the grandmother sat on my bench under the maple tree, for the first time, he said: "I'll get a golden seat in heaven for making that bench. The king has n't got a finer place than that, and he can't get any one to paint bluer skies or greener woods for him than we can see from here."

*

I am quite distressed by what the little pitchman tells me. He brings me word that the man who purchases my work intends to pay me a visit. He has just received an order to furnish carved wainscotings for the palace at the king's new hunting-seat, and wishes to see me about them.

How shall I avoid meeting him?

*

The good mother has helped me out of my trouble. She received him when he came, and told him that I would see no one. She would not consent to tell a falsehood, a point on which Walpurga would have had less scruples.

I now have the working designs, and beautiful woods with which to carry them out, for I have undertaken to execute a portion of the order.

*

It matters little what manner of life one leads, so long as there is self-awakening and self-consciousness. All arts, all science, merely exist in order that our own consciousness may be acted upon and aroused by that of others. He who can do this unaided is fortunate. He who awakes of himself when it is time to go to work in the morning, has no need of a watchman to call him.

*

Hansei has become a juryman. Walpurga is quite proud of it and when he took leave of us, it was with a certain air of pride and importance.

The idea of appealing to the conscience of the people for the verdict of justice, is a beautiful one.

*

Hansei has returned and had many terrible stories to tell.

It seems to me as if our lives and destinies were nothing more than shadows playing on the wall.

Hansei was deeply affected when he said to us :

"Yes, all my sins came back to me, and I felt as if I were doing penance when I pronounced judgment on others. It's nothing but good luck that prevents us from falling into sinful ways and keeps us off of the anxious bench."

*

(Sunday, May 28th.)—The grandmother is dead.

I cannot write of it. My hand seems as if paralyzed.

She kissed my eyes and said : "I kiss your eyes and hope they may never weep again."

Two hours before her death, she said to Hansei :

"Make a sled for Burgei. She is so anxious to have one. It'll please me if you do. You need n't fear, she won't harm herself. I beg of you, do it."

"Yes, yes, grandmother!" replied Hansei, with thick voice, and deeply affected by the thought that, even then, the grandmother's only care was for Burgei's pleasure.

*

The fear of death lies heavily upon me, and yet I feel an inward sense of freedom. I have beheld a beautiful end. My hand closed her eyes in death. I had not believed that I could do it. There was a time when I could not, when I lay on the floor feeling as if I were buried far under the earth, and beside me lay my father, cold in death.

The grandmother's death has relieved me of all fear. I am able to assist Walpurga. Her lamentations are excessive. "Now I'm an orphan like you!" she cried, throwing herself on my bosom. Then she cried to the dead one : "Oh mother! how can you be so cruel as to leave me? Oh God! and there's the bird still hopping about in its cage. Yes, you can jump about! but mother never will again!"

She took a cloth and covered the crossbill's cage with it, saying : "I'd like to let you fly, you dear little creature, but I can't. Mother loved you so much that I can't let you go." And then, addressing the corpse, she said : "Oh mother! can there ever be sunshine when you're not here? Yes, the clock ticks and keeps on going, and can be wound up. But, oh! the hours that will come and go without you! God forgive me for the many hours I was away from you!"

The door of the clothes-press suddenly flew open and startled Walpurga. Regaining her self-command, she said: "Yes, yes; I'll wear your clothes. I'll wear them for the sake of good. No evil thought shall enter my heart, no evil word pass my lips. Help me, so that I may always be yours! Oh God! there's no one left to say 'child' to me! I remember how you said: 'So long as you can say, father, and mother, there is yet a love that bears you in its arms. It's only when the parents are gone, that one is set down on the cold ground.' I'll hold fast to all you've told me to do, and so shall my children. And, Irmgard, you remember many of her wise sayings, don't you?"

Such was the burden of Walpurga's lament, and I could only reply:

"Yes, and hold fast to one thing she said: 'One may sin even in speech.' Do n't give way to your grief."

*

Walpurga took down her mother's prayer-book and read the prayer for the soul of the departed.

After that, she handed me the book, and what I read there filled me with gratitude and devotion. When our feelings are most violently agitated, we cannot give definite shape to our ideas. We, too, sing melodies that have been arranged by others. Our lips repeat the words of poets who have sung and suffered for us; for the poet's heart, in truth, contains the New Jerusalem of civilization. The great gulf that separates man from the beast, the plant, or the stone, is the possession of sympathy, by means of which, men are enabled to anticipate, or to follow each other's emotions. From the beginning until now, humanity has been chanting an undying melody in which my voice, too, forms a part. An everlasting sun, of whose rays I am one, has been lighting the path from generation to generation. The silent mountains outlast the races of men and no new one is added to their number; but, from generation to generation, new watch-towers of thought arise from the soul of humanity.

*

A happy death is the greatest good. Wondrous power of religion! Over the couch of the sick, there are bell-pulls, reaching into heaven, by which the patient is enabled to draw himself up and support himself. He imagines them there, even in their absence, and, supported by faith, thinks that he is holding fast to them.

*

After the grandmother's death, a strange feeling of quiet rested on the house. It was a great comfort to Walpurga to know that there were so many people at the funeral.

"Yes, they all honored her; but they really did n't know her. You and I knew her. Do you remember, Hansei, when the pota-

toes were stolen from the field, and she said: 'If one only knew who stole them,' and I said: 'Mother, would you inform against them?' 'You foolish thing,' she answered, reproachfully, 'how could you think I'd mean that? What I mean is: if we only knew who the people are that stole our potatoes during the night. They must know that we have but little, ourselves; and they must be very unfortunate people, whom we ought to help as much as we can afford to.' Yes, she said that; was there ever another creature who'd think of such a thing? That's the way the saints must have been who thought so kindly of all. She had no fear of the sick, nor hatred of the wicked. Her only thought was, how much they must have suffered before they got so sick, or so wicked. If I could only grow to be like her. Remind me of it all, Irmgard, when I get cross and scold. You'll help me, won't you? to become like my mother, so that, some day, my children will think of me as I do of her. Ah! if one were only always as good as one can be. Yes, she was right when she used to say: 'Wishing in the one hand and blowing into the other, amount to about the same thing.'"

*

I shall now return to my work. At such times, there is hardship and yet comfort in labor. Hansei and Walpurga are obliged to work. They cannot afford to give themselves up to grief, for too much depends on them. Be it with king or beggar, poet or peasant, the key note of the highest emotions is always the same.

Walpurga's lament was pitched in the same key as that of Lear for Cordelia, and yet how different. To a father who loses his child, the future is dead. To a child losing a parent, the past is dead. Ah! how weak is language.

*

I was quite alarmed by something that Hansei said to-day. Has doubt entered even these simple hearts? And they do their duty in this world without a firm belief in a future state.

In his funeral sermon, the preacher had said: "Behold the trees! A few weeks ago, they were dead. But with the spring, they return to life." "The pastor ought n't to have said that," remarked Hansei; "not that way, at any rate. He might convert children by that, but not us. What does he mean by talking about trees in that fashion? The trees that still have life in them will get new leaves in the spring, but the dead ones won't; they'll be cut down and others will be planted in their place."

*

We all of us have a strange feeling of loneliness—a feeling that something is missing. Uncle Peter is the most inconsolable of all.

"Now I must wander about the world alone; I have n't brother or sister left. She was the pride of our family," he repeats again and again.

Heretofore, he always slept in the garret, with the servants; but now Hansei has placed the old pensioner's room at his disposal. He is quite proud of it, but often complains, saying: "Why did I have to wait so long for all this? How stupid it was of my sister and me. We might have moved in there. Could we have found a prettier place? Oh, how nicely we would have lived there, and you could have gone along with us. Oh, how stupid old age is. We don't see the good nests till the trees are bare and there's nothing more left in them. 'One gets nothing to eat, till there are no teeth to bite it with,' as my sister used to say."

He always uses the words: "As my sister used to say," when he is on the point of making a statement which he does not wish contradicted, and I imagine he really thinks his sister did say it. He inherited her closet and, before opening it, he always knocks at the door.

*

My little pitchman is a good bee-master. He knows how to take care of bees and he calls them the poor man's pasture cattle.

"Since my sister's death," said he to me to-day, "I've had nothing but bad luck with my bees. They won't have anything more to do with me."

*

I have written nothing for months. For whom are these pages? Why do I torment my mind by recording every trifling incident or passing emotion? These questions unsettled and perplexed me, but now I am calm again. For months I have done nothing but work.

It seems to me that I must soon die, and yet I feel that I am in the fulness of my strength. I am often rendered uneasy by the thought that people trifle with my supposed madness.

*

At last I feel that my rest here was never complete, and that it might have been disturbed at any moment. But now, let what will come, I shall remain.

*

A storm! To us who note the sun, the moon, and every change of weather, a storm is quite a different affair from what it is to those who only look to see what weather it is when they are idle, or have a pleasure party in prospect.

One feels as if transported back to the time of creation, as if all were chaos once more; for the voice of the Infinite is heard in the thunder, and His glory blazes forth in the lightning.

At a public gaming-table, while the thunder was pealing and the lightning flashing, and the frivolous throng had withdrawn from the game, I once saw a lady of noble birth who insisted upon going on with the game after all the others had been frightened away. The croupiers were obliged to keep at their work. This

lady gives elegant entertainments, and a servant who stole a silver spoon from her, was sent to gaol. How low, to steal a spoon—! But what of her mistress?

There is, of course, one circumstance that I must not omit to mention. Every morning, before repairing to the gaming-table, she attends mass.

*

To be killed by lightning, must surely be the most beautiful death of all. On a lovely summer's day, to be suddenly struck down by the great marksman!

*

I have seen a man who moves in the polite world. He is a musician; young, good-looking, lively, and with delicate, well-cared-for hands. The storm had overtaken him, and he passed the night in our farmhouse. While here, he told us:

"I am already blind in this eye, and my physician tells me that I shall lose the other in less than a year, and so I have determined to see the great, vast, beautiful world. He who has not seen the Alps, does not know how beautiful our earth is. And so I take it up within me once more. I fix the sun, the mountains, the forests, the meads, the streams, the lakes and, above all, the human face, in my memory. Yes, child," said he to me, "I shall preserve my memory of your face, for you are the loveliest peasant girl I have ever seen. I shall learn your face by heart, just as I have learnt poems, so that I may repeat them to myself and call them back to me when darkness and solitude close in around me."

I felt quite constrained, but he was exceedingly cheerful. Now and then, he cast a curious glance at the bandage over my brow. What may he have thought of it?

I should like to have told him that I had once, at Gunther's house, sung a song of his, but he did not mention Gunther's name.

I cannot find words to describe the impression that this handsome young man made upon me. He seemed so full of power, and without the least trace of weakly sensibility. He comes from the north, and possesses somewhat of the austere beauty of the northern races. He has breathed the salt sea air, and that is what makes him so sturdy, as they call it there. Such natures impress and arouse me; one cannot remain languid, brooding or self-complacent, while in his society.

Oh, what cannot a strong will do! How the human mind wrestles with the powers of nature and conquers them!

*

To-day, I have wept for the first time since the grandmother's death. I now feel light and free again.

The young musician has left, and I could hear him sing while on his way down the valley.

If I could still be aught to another human being—I could feel

doubly as kind towards one who could neither see my brow, nor praise my beauty.

It is over—

What strange shadows does the game of life project, even unto us up here !

*

This visit has satisfied me that there is a large share of vanity still remaining in Walpurga. She could not help gradually directing the conversation to the subject, and, at last, told the stranger that she had been the crown prince's nurse, and had lived at the palace nearly a year. There is something in her that reminds me of the man who has many orders of merit, and who, like a general in citizen's dress, goes about without his medals and decorations. He modestly deprecates being addressed as "your excellency," but nevertheless enjoys it. The one year spent in the atmosphere of the court, has not been without its effect upon Walpurga.

Hansei, who felt kindly towards the stranger, and evinced great pity for him, was evidently annoyed by his wife's ostentation ; but, with his usual great self-command, refrained from expressing his annoyance. But, to-day, when they were going to church, Hansei asked :

"Would n't you like to have a ribbon around your neck and wear a picture of yourself and the crown prince, so that no one may ever forget what you once were?"

I do not think that Walpurga will ever again allude to her brilliant past.

*

The grandmother's death and funeral afforded me an opportunity to become better acquainted with the village schoolmaster. He has a tolerably fair education, but delights in making a display of it, and is fond of using big words, in order to impress the listener and to imply : "You do n't quite understand me, after all." But the hearty feeling with which he entered into our grief, has raised him in my esteem, and I have frankly let him know as much. And so one day he said to me : "Your skill in wood carving is as good as a marriage portion. You can earn much money by it." I had no idea what he meant by the remark.

Last Sunday, however, I was enlightened.

He came here, dressed in a black coat and white cotton gloves, and made me a formal offer of marriage.

He could not be induced to believe that I would never marry, and he urgently repeated his offer, saying that he would only desist if I really loved another.

Walpurga fortunately came to the rescue. The good man seemed as if utterly crushed by his rejection, and went away. Why must I fill yet another heart with pain ? Of my own, I do not care to speak.

*

I have not yet done with the schoolmaster's suit.

Walpurga asked me why I wished to remain so lonely. As long as I did not care to return to the great world, I might as well make this good man happy, and would be able to do much good to the children and the poor of the village. I have thus come to know myself anew. I am not made for beneficence. I am not a sister of mercy. I cannot visit the sick, unless I know and love them. I could nurse the grandmother, but no one else. I dislike peasant rooms, and the dull, heavy atmosphere of these abodes of simplicity. I am not a beneficent fairy. My senses are too easily offended. I do not care to make myself better than I am; that is, I should like to make myself better, but all one can do is to improve the good traits that already exist, and that one good trait I do not possess. I must be honest about the matter. I could find it easier to live in a convent. This confession does not make me unhappy, but melancholy. The desire to enjoy life, and to commune with myself, is so strong.

*

Franz, Gundel's betrothed, has been summoned to join his regiment.

My little pitchman has just returned from the town and brings me news that "there'll be war with the French." He tells me, too, that our business will become poor, that the people do not care to buy, and that our employer offers only half the usual price; and so I will be working for stock.—I, too, must help to bear the world's burden.

How strange it seems to me that I no longer know anything about my country and the age in which we live. One consolation is left me. In such warlike times, they will not seek the lost one.

*

We are all, unconsciously, on heights from which the graves of our beloved dead are invisible. Were they ever present, there would be neither work nor song in this world.

Self-oblivion or self-knowledge—about this, everything revolves.

*

Even in hottest summer, I can always see the snow-capped mountains before me. I do not know how to express it, but they always inspire me with strange and confused emotions. I pay no regard to the date or the seasons, for I have them all at once.

In my heart there is also a spot on which rest eternal snows.

*

I have now been here between two and three years. I have formed a resolve which it will be difficult to carry out. I shall go out into the world once more. I must again behold the scenes of my past life. I have tested myself severely.

May it not be a love of adventure, that genteel yet vulgar desire

to undertake what is unusual or fraught with peril? Or is it a morbid desire to wander through the world after having died, as it were?

No; far from it. What can it be? An intense longing to roam again, if it be only for a few days. I must kill the desire, lest it kill me.

Whence arises this sudden longing?

Every tool that I use while at work, burns my hand.

I must go.

I shall obey the impulse, without worrying myself with speculations as to its cause. I am subject to the rules of no order. My will is my only law. I harm no one by obeying it. I feel myself free; the world has no power over me.

I dreaded informing Walpurga of my intention. When I did so, her tone, her words, her whole manner, and the fact that she, for the first time, called me "child," made it seem as if her mother were still speaking to me.

"Child," said she, "you're right! Go! It'll do you good. I believe that you'll come back and will stay with us, but if you do n't, and another life opens up to you—your expiation has been a bitter one, far heavier than your sin."

Uncle Peter was quite happy when he learned that we were to be gone from one Sunday to the Sunday following. When I asked him whether he was curious as to where we were going, he replied:

"It's all one to me. I'd travel over the whole world with you, wherever you'd care to go; and if you were to drive me away, I'd follow you like a dog and find you again."

I shall take my journal with me, and will note down every day.

*

(By the lake.)—I find it difficult to write a word.

The threshold I am obliged to cross, in order to go out into the world, is my own gravestone.

I am equal to it.

How pleasant it was to descend towards the valley. Uncle Peter sang, and melodies suggested themselves to me, but I did not sing. Suddenly he interrupted himself and said:

"In the inns, you'll be my niece, won't you?"

"Yes."

"But you must call me 'uncle' when we're there?"

"Of course, dear uncle."

He kept nodding to himself, for the rest of the way, and was quite happy.

We reached the inn at the landing. He drank, and I drank, too, from the same glass.

"Where are you going?" asked the hostess.

"To the capital," said he, although I had not said a word to him about it. Then, in a whisper, he said to me:

"If you intend to go elsewhere, the people need n't know everything."

I let him have his own way.

I looked for the place where I had wandered at that time. There—there was the rock—and on it a cross, bearing, in golden characters, the inscription :

Here perished
IRMA, COUNTESS VON WILDENORT,
In the twenty-first year
of her life.

Traveler, pray for her and honor her memory.

I know not how long I lay there. When I revived, there were several people busying themselves about me and, among them, my little pitchman, who was quite violent in expressing his grief.

I was able to walk to the inn. My little pitchman said to the people :

"My niece is n't used to walking so far. She sits in her room all the year round. She's a wood-carver, and a mighty clever one, too."

The people were all kind to me. Guests were constantly coming and going. Some of them told the little pitchman that the beautiful monument out yonder was a great advantage to the inn ; that, during the summer, it was visited by hundreds of persons ; and that, every year, a nun from the convent came there, attended by another nun, and prayed at the cross.

"And who put up the monument ?" asked the little pitchman.

"The brother of the unfortunate one."

"No, it was the king," said others.

The conversation often dropped off, but always began again anew.

Some said that the place must be haunted, for a beautiful creature known as Black Esther had drowned herself at the same time. She was a daughter of Zenza, who was now crazed and lived on the other side of the lake ; and who could tell whether the beautiful lady—for she was very beautiful—had n't drowned herself, too. To this the hostess angrily answered that the Countess had had many gold chains and diamonds about her, and a diamond star on her forehead ; that the horse which had thrown her had been seen ; that her brother had wanted to shoot the horse, but it had been bewitched and, from that day, would eat nothing and at last dropped down dead. Others said that the Countess's father had commanded her to drown herself, and that she had been an obedient child and had done so.

Thus I had a glimpse of a legend in process of formation.

"And why was the father supposed to have commanded that ?" enquired the little pitchman.

"Because she loved a married man. It won't do to talk of that."

"Why won't it?" whispered a sailor. "She and the king were fond of each other, and, to save herself from doing wrong, she took her life."

How can I describe my emotions, while listening to their conversation?

Years hence, perhaps, some solitary child of man may cross the lake and sing the song of the beautiful countess with the diamond star on her brow.

I do not remember how night came on, and how I at last fell asleep. I awoke and still heard the song of the drowned countess. Its sad, deep strain had filled my dream. All that I had experienced seemed but as a vision. I looked out of my window—I looked across the lake and beheld the golden characters in the rosy dawn.

What was I to do? Should I turn back?

My little pitchman was quite happy when he saw me so fresh again. The hostess offered me a picture of the monument, saying that every visitor bought one. My uncle bargained with her, got it for half the price she had asked, and then presented it to me. I carry the picture of my gravestone with me.

I felt irresistibly drawn towards another grave—my father's. While my hand rested on the mound, an inner voice said to me: "You will be reconciled."—I expiate and atone for my sin.

How the memories awakened by these different spots agitated me. I cannot write about it—my heart is breaking! Besides this, it is filled with fear. I shall be brief. I am unable to continue my recital. I shall never again look at these pages.

We went to the Frauensee and crossed over to the convent. Among the nuns, I saw my beloved Emma, who makes a yearly pilgrimage to my gravestone. For the first time in many years, I prayed with her. What difference does it make whether one still lives or is dead, as long as the thought—

My hand trembles while I write, but I will. . . .

I had left the convent and was returning across the lake, when the thought flashed upon me: "I expiate in freedom! That is my only pride. My will holds me as fast as the bolts of the convent gate would do, and I—I—work—"

Everything was carried out just as I had determined. I saw the whole world once more and bade it adieu.

We journeyed to the capital. The city noises and the rapid driving alarmed me.

When I again heard the rustling of a silk gown, for the first time, the sound quite affected me. I felt as if impelled to accost the first lady I met in a fashionable bonnet and veil. These people seemed to belong to me. I felt as if returning from the lower regions into sunlight.

I stopped to read the placards that were posted up at the corners of the streets. Am I still living in the same world?

There is music, singing, etc. One amuses the other. No one finds life's joys within himself.

All things in this world are related to each other. Thou hast lost the connecting link.

I was sitting in a small inn, while I looked on at the bustling life of the city.

I saw the houses here and there—and it seemed as if I beheld the ghost of a part of my life. If the people knew— There are streets here with which I am not acquainted. Men pass without a thought for each other. City folk all look ill-humored; I have not met one sunny, happy face.

*

I went to the picture gallery. What delights the eye there feeds upon! And besides these, there is the intoxicating wealth of color and the solemn stillness of the place itself. I saw my old teacher and heard him saying to a stranger: "A work of art does not derive its great historical character from the importance of the subject, or the size of the picture. What is required of the artist is that he should be filled with, and, at the same time, transport the beholder to, the scene that he attempts to depict. The same subject can be conceived in various ways, and may be executed either as a light, *genre* piece, or in the grand and more enduring historical style."

While I passed through the rooms, I felt like one intoxicated. All my old friends greeted me. They are clothed in undying colors, and have remained faithful and unchanged. The power of nature and of art lie in their truthfulness. But they do not speak; they merely exist. No—nature alone is mute; art lends it voice. It is not by the lips alone that the human mind expresses itself. I felt as if the *Maria Ægyptica* must suddenly turn towards me and ask: "Do you know me now?"

I grew dizzy and fearful.

While in the Raphael gallery, environed by the highest beauty earth has ever known, conceived as only the clearest eye could conceive it, I felt as if in another world.

A happy thought occurred to me: Art is the first liberator of humanity, evoking a second, joy-creating life, and—what is even a greater boon—revealing the highest realm, where every one who is called may enter. The poor son of the people says: "I and my spirit shall dwell in this lofty, this blessed abode." He reigns there eternally, surrounded by his ancestors in art. There dwells immortality; or, better still, death never enters there. The paternal mansion of free, creative art contains infinite space, and is an eternal home. Let him who has lived happily, enter there.

*

I stood before the palace. The windows of the room that I once

occupied were open. My parrot was still there in its golden cage, and called out: "God keep you! God keep you!" But it does not add my name, for it has forgotten it.

*

On the table before me there lay a newspaper, the first that I had seen for years. It was long before I could summon resolution to read it, but I did so at last and read as follows:

"His majesty the king has departed for the sea baths, where he will remain for six weeks. Prime minister Von Bronnen," (Von Bronnen minister!) "Count Wildenort, master of the horse," (my brother!) "and privy councilor Sixtus, the king's physician, are of his suite."

How much these few lines conveyed to me! There was no need of my reading any further. Yet there was another paragraph, saying:

"Her majesty the queen, accompanied by his royal highness the crown prince, has removed to the summer palace."

*

I walked about the city and looked into the shop windows and at the many objects which I no longer require. In one of the windows, I found some of my carvings on exhibition. "That 's our work!" exclaimed the little pitchman, who boldly went into the shop and enquired as to the price, and also asked by whom they had been done. The price named was a high one, and the merchant added: "These works of art"—yes, he spoke of them as works of art—"are made by a half-crazy peasant girl, who lives in the Highlands."

I looked at my little pitchman. He was terribly afraid. His glance seemed to implore me not to lose my senses while away from home. His fear was not without good grounds, for, in spite of my self-control, my faithful guide must have found much that was strange in my behavior.

I bought several small plaster casts of gems of Greek art; and now I have types of undying beauty ever with me. It required clever management to effect such unusual purchases, and I only ventured to attempt it during the twilight hour.

I saw many familiar faces, but always quickly averted mine. I would so gladly have spoken to Mademoiselle Kramer. She has become quite aged. She was carrying a book with the yellow label of the circulating library. How many thousands of books the dear old woman must have read! She reads book after book, just as men smoke cigars.

I went to Gunther's house. The courtyard gate was open. There is now a factory there, and the lovely trees have all been felled.

On the head of the figure of Victory at the arsenal, there sat a pigeon with glossy plumage— Although without eye-glasses, I could see the figure quite distinctly.

*

The evening afforded me pure delight—the purest I ever knew, or, as I firmly believe, ever will know.

Mozart's "Magic Flute" was performed at the theatre.

I went there with my little pitchman. We sat in the uppermost tier. I saw no one, although the crowded house must have contained many whom I knew. All my senses were held captive by music's magic spell.

It is past midnight. My little pitchman and I are stopping at a teamsters' inn. I cannot rest until I put my feelings into words.

Mozart's "Magic Flute" is one of those immortal creations that dwell in purest ether, in a region beyond the passions and struggles of mankind. I have often heard the text objected to as puerile, but, at that height, all action, all understanding, all personages, all surroundings, must needs be allegorical. All that is hard and narrow is cast aside, and man becomes a bird, his life pure and natural, full of love and wisdom. The childlike or childish character of the text is singularly true to nature. It is only the *blasé* who can find it dull and insipid.

It is Mozart's last dramatic work, and in it he appears at his best, in all the fullness of his genius, as if already transfigured. His various figures pass before him in review, created anew, as it were; less fixed and individualized, but all the more pure and ethereal. Using the word in its best sense, there is something supernatural in the way in which he has here gathered and combined the chords that else were scattered, into one harmonious whole.

The opening chorus of priests is the march of humanity, and the "O Isis!" is full of the sunshine of blissful peace. This is the fabled paradise—a life above this, in the free ether, beyond the reach of storm or tempest; a region to which music alone can transport us.

For hours, I felt as if thus transported, and know not how I descended again. Thoughts without number hover about me. This music breathes a spirit of noble, self-conscious repose, and is free from all oppressed humility. It is a life that can never fade; nay, it is the odor of ripened fruit.

This last work of Mozart's has a companion piece in Lessing's last work: "Nathan the Wise." In both of them the soul wings its flight far beyond the disjointed, struggling world and dwells in the pure region beyond, where peace and piety have become actual existences, and where the vexations of narrow, circumscribed, finite humanity provoke but a smile. The great treasure of humanity is not buried in the past; it must be dug out, fashioned and created from the future.

"Nathan" and the "Magic Flute" abound with precious gems. They prove that happiness is not an illusion, but they speak in a language unintelligible to him who does not bear within himself a sense of things above this life.

To have lived such hours is life eternal.

The song of the three boys is full of divine bliss. If the angels in Raphael's Sistine Madonna were to sing, such would be their melodies, and in this register would their voices move.

I would like to hear such sounds at my dying hour, for that would be an ecstatic death.

If such ecstasy could only continue without interruption.

After the opera was over, I sat in the park for a long time. All was dark and silent.

Filled with this music, I would gladly fly back to my forest solitude, have nothing more to do with the world, and silently pass away. After these, no other tones should fall upon my ear and disturb me.

But I was obliged to return to the world.

And here I sit, late at night, the whole world resting in sleep and self-oblivion, while I am awake in self-oblivion.

O ye eternal spirits! Could one but be with you and utter a word, a sound, that should pass into infinity! In yonder gallery, eyes that never close, look down upon the coming and departing generations. And here there are undying harmonies and imperishable words.

O ye blessed spirits, ye who through art create a second world! The world confuses and perplexes us, but ye make everything clear as the light of day. Ye are the blessed genii who ever offer mankind the wine of life in the golden chalice which, though millions drink from it, is never emptied.

It is with deep pain that I depart from the realm of color and that of sound. This, and this only, is indeed a deprivation.

*

And now for the last halting place.

We wandered on in the direction of the summer palace. We walked up and down before the park railing. Up by the chapel, and under the weeping ash, I could see the court ladies sitting on the ornamented chairs and busy with their embroidery. Ah, there is many a one there, no better than I am, and yet she jests and laughs, is happy and respected. Aye, there lies the misery. We are constantly blunting our moral sense and saying to ourselves: "Look about you; others are no better than you are."

Presently they all arose and bowed profoundly. The gates were opened and the queen drove out, the prince sitting beside her. She looked at me and the little pitchman, and greeted us. My eyes failed me.

I know not. Did I see aright? The queen looked cheerful. The prince has become a fine boy. He has kept the promise of his infancy.

My little pitchman conversed with a stone-breaker, who was working on the road. He was loud in his praises of the queen and her only child, the crown prince. So she has only one child—

I was so weary that I was obliged to rest by the wayside. In former days, I had so often proudly passed by the spot where I was now sitting. No matter! It is well that it is so. The little pitchman was delighted when I told him that our path now lay homeward. He must have felt quite alarmed about me, and must have thought to himself: "The folks who say that you're not quite right, were not so far out after all."

*

Those who see me not, think me dead; those who do see me, think me crazed.

I had determined that, in case of discovery, I would tell all to the king and queen, and, after that, quietly return to my retreat.

It is better thus.

*

We returned home. When I reached the foot of the mountain on which we live; and had begun to ascend it, I asked myself: "Is this your home?" And yet, absence makes it seem like a new home. The life I lead here is a real life.

Since I have noted down this thought, I feel as if a weight were lifted from my heart. While writing, I often felt as giddy as if standing on the edge of a precipice; but I shall remain firm. I will not look at these pages again. But now work begins once more, and my head will cease to be filled with thoughts of repentance. The next minute is ours; the passing moment is scarcely so; and the past one not at all.

There is much work awaiting me. I am glad that it is so. Walpurga and the children are quite happy to have me with them again.

*

During my absence, Walpurga had my room painted a pale red. It is in wretched taste, and yet I must needs show myself grateful. She thought that I would not return.

These people constitute my whole world, and yet I could leave them any minute. Will it be thus when I, too, leave the world?

*

Courageously to forego the world—I think I have read the expression somewhere; but now I understand it. I feel it within myself and am carrying it out; not timidly, not sadly,—but courageously.

*

I am no longer sad. The calm satisfaction with which I resign the world emancipates me.

When I look at life, I ask myself: "Why all these struggles and all these barriers, until we come to the last barrier of all, unto death itself?" The great heroes of history and my little pitchman—not one of them had the odds of fortune in his favor. No destiny is completely and purely fulfilled.

Old Jochem said his prayers every day, and would often pass whole hours thus employed; yet he would curse mankind and his own fate. And I have known ladies of quality, who, after listening in rapt ecstasy to the music of Beethoven, would dispute and wrangle after the most vulgar fashion.

"Courageously to forego." The words are ever haunting me. Thanks for this precept, kind spirit, whoever thou mayst be! To live out the day and not allow it to be darkened by the knowledge that night must come, to forego with courage—that is the sum of all.

I never would have believed that I could live without joy, without pleasures; but now I see that I can. Joy and pleasure are not the conditions upon which my life is based.

We have it in our power to attune the mind to cheerfulness; that is, to calmness and clearness.

*

How many years was it that Hermione, of the "Winter's Tale," remained hidden? I have quite forgotten.

*

I am constantly reminded, while at work, of various passages, of the solos, the great choruses, and even the instrumental accompaniments, in Mozart's "Magic Flute." They fill the silent air with their sounds, and bear me aloft.

Above all, the appeal, "Be steadfast!" with the three short notes, d, e, d, and the trumpet-blast that follows, is ever sounding in my ears like some spiritual watchword. The highest truths should be conveyed by music alone, and would thus become more forcible and enduring. Be steadfast—

I am again trying to solve the enigma of life.

Man may not do all that he can, or to which he feels impelled. Since he is human, he must recognize the limit of his rights before he reaches the limit of his powers.

At court they often discussed the saying: "Right before might." I have melted down the phrase in the alembic of thought. I have coined it anew.

How beautiful is the legend of paradise! The first human pair were placed there; as far as their powers went, everything, with a single exception, was permitted to them—and the fruit tempted them. But there is no paradise. The beast alone possesses what may be termed paradise. It is free to do whatever it can. As long, however, as there is a prohibition which man, as a moral being, must know, there can be no paradise, for perfect freedom is at an end.

What I mean is this: self-consciousness is gained by overstepping the barrier. It is eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. From that moment, man's joys are no longer provided for him. He must create them, either from within himself or from his surroundings. Now he begins to wrestle with nature, and his life

becomes one of deeds. Work, whether directed to self-perfection or intended to benefit the world, is a second creation.

My every thought seems as if it were an inarticulate, stammering attempt to express the words of knowledge.

The little world around me and the so-called great world that still lives in my memory, now seem to me as if illumined and rendered transparent by the golden sunlight.

To perceive the barriers, and thus recognize the necessity of law, is liberty. I am free at last.

*

I did well in going out into the world again. Or do I merely think so because I feel that I have done right? I am a freer being now. I have ceased to be the poor soul that longed to return to the world. My life is no longer a hell. I could now return to the world without fear. Now that I can courageously forego it, I do not feel the privation. Oh, how presumptuous we are to imagine that others need us! I, too, no longer need any one.

*

The telegraph wires are being put up between here and my forest view. The busy doings of the great world are now to pass by me. I can see men on the ladders, fastening the wires to the high poles.

*

Walpurga tells me that my voice is quite hoarse, but I feel quite well. Perhaps it is because I speak so little, sometimes passing whole days without uttering a word. The cool, pure breezes that I inhale every morning are like a refreshing draught, and the blue of the sky is far deeper up here.

*

Gunther once told me that I am of an unrhythmic temperament. He was in the right. If I were not, I would now express my deepest thoughts in melodious words. I feel so happy, so free, that my thoughts could find proper expression in poetry alone.

*

Although Hansei has now been in possession for a long while, he seems grateful for everything. It makes him happy to know that he is able to buy fine cows and pretty bells for them, and this gratitude for his good fortune lends an inner tenderness to his rough exterior.

*

(August 28th.)—After long, sunless days of deathlike torpor, the sky is bright and clear again. The snowy peaks, the green hills and the valleys are bathed in sunshine. I feel as if I must fly away and soar through space; but I remain here and work; for, as my work was faithful to me in dark days, so shall I remain faithful to it in bright ones. I shall only wander forth when evening comes and work is at an end. This is Goethe's birthday. I think

Goethe would have been friendly towards me, if I had lived in his time and near him.

It is pleasant, after all, that we know the hour of his birth. It was at noon. I write these lines during the very hour, and my thoughts are of him.

What would he have counseled me to do with my lost life?
Is it a lost life?—It is not.

*

Franz has returned from the target shooting and was the hero of the occasion. What shouts of joy and triumph! He gained the first prize, a fine rifle. The target, riddled with bullets, is displayed before our house.

*

A falling leaf in autumn—how many bright summer days and mild nights were required to perfect it? What was it while it hung on the tree? What is it now, when it falls to the ground?

And what is the result of a whole human life, when summed up in a few sentences?

*

How many feet is our farm above the level of the sea? I do not know, and Hansei would smile to think of one's asking such a question. We perform our duty on the little spot of earth on which we dwell. Its effect flows out into the great sea of humanity and of history, without any interference of ours. The brook goes on in its course, driving the mill-wheels, irrigating the meadows, and is at last swallowed up in the ocean, whence come the clouds and storms that again feed the brook.

*

In spite of all that I grew up to, all that, in a course of years, I have practiced, acted, or thought, I cannot help regarding myself as a block of wood—even now, I know not what will become of me, or who will hew me into shape.

I have a beautiful task on hand—a piece of work that will remain and be a constant pleasure to me—work for our own house.

When the additions were made to the dwelling, I succeeded, with the assistance of the carpenter, in giving greater symmetry to the dwelling itself. The piazza running round the house, received a more open roof, and the balustrade a more pleasing form.

Hansei has often said that the forest clearing would make a beautiful meadow. Yesterday, he came home and said:

"I have it! I'm having the trees on the hillside felled, and have left four fine trunks standing. They form a square and I'll have a hut built there, and then we'll have a mountain meadow of our own. The farm can't thrive without one. It's far up, to be sure—about two hours walk; but we can see the clearing from here."

"And just think of it," said Hansei, who was delighted with his plan, "where the trees have been cut down in front, you can see

ever so far, way off to the lake where we used to live. To be sure, it 's nothing more than a little sparkling spot of blue, but it looks at one so kindly, just like a faithful eye from home, or like one who has known you from childhood. It was beautiful at our home, but it 's more beautiful here ; so do n't let us sin by being ungrateful."

I have made the drawings for the shepherd's hut. My little pitchman is quite clever in cutting everything. We are working at our Noah's ark, and are as merry as apprentices.

I am also carving a horse's head in life size, for the gable of the roof.

*

Hansei and I have just returned from where the new shepherd's hut is being built.

After the invigorating mountain ascent of to-day, I feel as if I had been present at the dawning of creation : a new road, a new dwelling and a spot where human being had never been before. I feel as if experience had nothing more in store for me ; as if all earthly burdens had fallen from me.

*

When, after a day of great exertion and mountain climbing, one awakes on the following morning, the fatigue has passed away. One feels refreshed and invigorated, and satisfied with the test to which he has subjected himself ; for it has proved his power of endurance and his ability to impose tasks upon himself. For awhile, I had left my past and possessed nothing but myself. Now that I have returned to familiar scenes, they welcome me again. I can easily realize the calm peacefulness of those who thus picture to themselves the awakening to the eternal life.

*

The shepherd's hut is empty. The walls are bare, except where the picture of our Savior hangs in the corner, waiting for the beings who are to come there. It is, and ever will remain, a blessing that men can thus bear with them, to desert wastes and lonely heights, the image of pure and perfect man. It is this which enables a more perfect civilization and a great history to take possession of the modern world.

If only the pure knowledge of the pure spirit always went with it.

*

(October.)—Now that winter approaches, my thoughts are always of the lonely shepherd's hut, upon the mountain. I am always there in my dreams, alone and undergoing strange experiences. I think I must move up there next spring. I feel that life will be incomplete until I have spent a whole summer with plants and beasts, with mountain and brook, with the sun, the moon and the stars.

Art thou still dissatisfied, insatiate heart, always longing for something else ? What can it be ? I must and will have rest !

*

He who needs nothing but himself to be happy, is happy indeed.

*

Here, once again, I am like the first human being that walked the earth.

Man, of himself, is pure and unsullied, and out of him, flows the world. There lies the secret which I shall not name.

*

It makes me happy to think that I am to go still higher ; further up the mountain, where it is even quieter and more lonely than here. I feel as if something were calling me there. It is neither a voice, nor a sound. I know not what it is, and yet it calls me, draws me, allures me, with its : "Come ! come !" —Yes, I am coming !

*

I know that I am not dying. I would sooner doubt that I am living. The world is no longer an enigma to me.

*

From my mountain height I look down on those I have wronged. They are my father, my queen, and, worst of all, myself !

*

Of all things in this world, untruth is the surest to avenge itself. When I wrote to the king, from the convent, I vaunted my truthfulness and yet, at the same time, I was thoroughly untruthful. I aimed at bringing about an act of freedom and yet, at heart, my only desire was to write to him and impress him by my love of liberty. I felt proud of my opposition to popular opinion and hoped thus to show him that I was his strong friend. He declined my proffered advice, and yet it was I who again opened the convents. Falsehood avenges itself.

Purity and freedom can only exist where there is perfect truthfulness.

*

If I could only find words to express the delight with which to-day's sunset filled me ! It is night, and as surely as the sun shone on my face, so surely does a ray of sunlight shine within me. I am a ray of eternity. Compared with it, what are days or years ? What is a whole human life ?

*

I never rightly knew why I was always dissatisfied, and yearning for the next hour, the next day, the next year, hoping that it would bring me that which I could not find in the present. It was not love, for love does not satisfy. I desired to live in the passing moment, but could not. It always seemed as if something were waiting for me without the door, and calling me. What could it have been ?

I know now ; it was a desire to be at one with myself, to understand myself. Myself in the world, and the world in me.

*

The vain man is the loneliest of human beings. He is constantly longing to be seen, understood, acknowledged, admired and loved.

I could say much on the subject, for I, too, was once vain. It was only in actual solitude that I conquered the loneliness of vanity. It is enough for me that I exist.

How far removed this is from all that is mere show.

*

Now I understand my father's last act. He did not mean to punish me. His only desire was to arouse me, to lead me to self-consciousness, to the knowledge that, teaching us to become different from what we are, saves us.

*

I understand the inscription in my father's library: "When I am alone, then am I least alone."

Yes; when alone, one can more perfectly lose himself in the life universal. I have lived and have come to know the truth. I can now die.

*

He who is at one with himself, possesses all.

*

What will people say?—These few words represent the world's tyranny, the power that perverts our nature and temperaments, and account for our mental obliquity of vision. These four words rule everywhere. Walpurga is swayed by them, while Hansei has quite a different standard, the only true one. Without knowing it, he acts just as Gunther would have done.

Man's first and only duty is to preserve his peace of mind. He should be utterly indifferent as to "what the people will say." That question makes the mind homeless. Do right and fear naught! Rest assured that with all your consideration for the world, you can never satisfy it. But if you will go on in your own way, indifferent to the praise or blame of others, you have conquered the world, and it cheerfully subjects itself to you. As long as you care for "what the people will say," so long are you the slave of others.

*

I believe that I know what I have done. I have no compassion for myself. This is my full confession.

I have sinned—not against nature, but against the world's rules. Is that sin? Look at the tall pines in yonder forest. The higher the tree grows, the more do the lower branches die away, and thus the tree in the thick forest is protected and sheltered by its fellows, but can, nevertheless, not perfect itself in all directions.

I desired to lead a full and complete life and yet to be in the forest, to be in the world and yet in society. But he who means to live thus, must remain in solitude. As soon as we become mem-

bers of society, we cease to be mere creatures of nature. Nature and morality have equal rights and must form a compact with each other, and where there are two powers with equal rights, there must be mutual concessions.

Herein lies my sin.

He who desires to live a life of nature alone, must withdraw himself from the protection of morality. I did not fully desire either the one or the other ; hence I was crushed and shattered.

My father's last action was right. He avenged the moral law, which is just as human as the law of nature. The animal world knows neither father nor mother, so soon as the young is able to take care of itself. The human world does know them and must hold them sacred.

I see it all quite clearly. My sufferings and my expiation are deserved. I was a thief! I stole the highest treasures of all: confidence, love, honor, respect, splendor.

How noble and exalted the tender souls appear to themselves when a poor rogue is sent to gaol for having committed a theft! But what are all possessions which can be carried away, when compared with those that are intangible!

Those who are summoned to the bar of justice are not always the basest of mankind.

I acknowledge my sin, and my repentance is sincere.

My fatal sin, the sin for which I now atone, was that I dissembled, that I denied and extenuated that which I represented to myself as a natural right. Against the queen, I have sinned worst of all. To me, she represents that moral order which I violated and yet wished to enjoy.

To you, oh queen, to you—lovely, good, and deeply injured one—do I confess all this!

If I die before you—and I hope that I may—these pages are to be given to you.

*

We cannot take nature for our only guide. He who follows its law, has no share, no inheritance in the world of history. He knows nothing of the beings who lived before him, and who helped to make the world what it is. With him, the world is barren; with him, it dies. He who follows naught but nature's law and persuades himself that he is thus doing right, denies humanity and, at the same time, denies that the human race has a history which is not represented by himself alone, but has existed before him and now exists without him. In spite of gloss and varnish, he who denies humanity is but a savage. He stands without the pale of civilization. All that he does, or wears, or enjoys, of the fruits of culture, is but a theft. He should sing no song but that which is natural to him, like the bird which brings its plumage and its song into the world with it, and has no special garb or tones; for there all is species, all is the law of nature.

ON THE HEIGHTS.

In this alone lies the truth.

*

Above all right and all duty, is love, leading ~~lover and beloved~~ to the pure unfolding of their natures.

Woe to those who desecrate its divine mission!

*

My father's fate is also clear to me, now. He wished to live for and perfect himself; and yet he had children whose love and affection he claimed. His death was one of the terrible consequences of the life he had led. That, however, does not make me innocent, and he dealt justly towards me.

I have no desire to offer excuses for anything I have done. I mean to be perfectly truthful. That is my only happiness, my only pride.

*

Your worth depends upon what you are; not upon what you have.

*

I have found the centre about which my mind revolves.

*

During the last few days, it has seemed to me as if my father's terrible punishment had never been executed, as if it were only the guilty presentiment of my own imagination.

What has induced this sudden thought that will not leave me?

I know! I know! Whatever may have happened is now atoned for! There can be a renewed life, a deliverance achieved by ourselves, and I feel that this has been vouchsafed me. I am once more free! I can return to the world and remove the bandage from my brow!

To the world! What is the world? I have it within me. I am in the world, and the world is in me. I am!

*

I have sung again for the first time. Oh, how much good it did me! No one heard me but myself.

No bird sings for itself; it sings for its mate. Man alone can sing and think for himself. He alone possesses self-consciousness.

*

The calm of morn, which is always so dear to me, now seems to last during the whole day.

*

Yonder brook often seems to roar much more loudly than at other times. It is because a sudden wind catches it and bears the sound-waves towards me.

*

(At work.)—When the material on which we work is hard and unyielding, we learn to make a virtue of necessity. I often chance upon changes in the fibre or grain which necessitate new

beauties or deformities. I often bring out touches which I did not intend, and those that I did intend become quite different from what I had expected, just because the wood is master, as well as my hand. Varnish, blessed friend in need, covers both beauties and defects.

*

We create nothing. We merely shape and discover that which already exists and which, without our assistance, cannot release itself from chaos.

Oh, I feel as if I at last understand the whole world and all of art and work. I feel that my longings for the infinite are satisfied.

I now know the cause of the clashing between our lofty thoughts and our lives of petty detail.

Hansei, Walpurga, the king, the queen, Gunther, Emma—what are they all? Mere drops in the ocean of humanity. When I think of myself as a part of the whole, I forget them all. That destroys love for individuals; desire and enjoyment cease, and, with them, passion and heart-ache.

And what am I? What still remains to me? We can conceive the great and complete whole, while our love can only be for the individual, for that which is nearest to us. And the nearest of all is God, the great idea of universal law.

*

Walpurga is quite anxious about me. She often comes to me, and it seems as if she wished to say something. She looks at me so strangely, and yet says nothing. She tells me, again and again, how lovely it will be at the shepherd's hut, and how quiet and happy I will be up there. She wishes the mountains were already cleared of snow. She would like me to be away from here, and says that I would soon become strong. And yet I do not feel ill, but she always says: "You shine so!"

I feel as if I had settled my accounts with the world. I am perfectly calm, and it may be that this feeling casts its radiance about me. I could no longer fear the world. I could again live among human beings, for I feel myself free. Nothing more can wound me.

*

I feel a desire for more perfect solitude. Shall I find greater seclusion, profounder silence, up there? It seems as if I were ever hearing the words "lonely as death." (*mutterseelenallein*). Oh, thou blessed, German tongue! What a blessing it is that, without effort, I bear the rich stores of my mother-tongue within me, and that, when thoughts gush forth from every nook and cranny of the brain, I have some word vessel at command with which to receive the idea. It seems to me as if I must be always speaking and writing and rejoicing because of this possession.

I must break off. Our most mysterious, our deepest thoughts,

are like the bird on the bough. He sings, but, as soon as he sees an eye watching him, he flies away.

*

I can now accurately tell the season of the year and, often, the hour of the day, by the way in which the first sunbeams fall into my room and on my workbench in the morning. My chisel hangs before me on the wall, and is my index.

*

The drizzling, spring showers now fall on the trees—and thus it is with me. It seems as if there were a new delight in store for me. What can it be? I shall patiently wait!

*

A strange feeling comes over me, as if I were lifted up from the chair on which I am sitting, and were flying, I know not whither! What is it? I feel as if dwelling in eternity.

Everything seems flying towards me; the sunlight and the sunshine, the rustling of the forests and the forest breezes, beings of all ages and of all kinds—all seem beautiful and rendered transparent by the sun's glow.

I am!

I am in God!

If I could only die now and be wafted through this joy to dissolution and redemption!

But I will live on until my hour comes.

Come, thou dark hour, whenever thou wilt! To me, thou art light!

I feel that there is light within me. Oh, Eternal Spirit of the universe, I am one with thee!

I was dead, and I live—I shall die and yet live.

Everything has been forgiven and blotted out.—There was dust on my wings.—I soar aloft into the sun and into infinite space. I shall die singing from the fullness of my soul. Shall I sing!

Enough.

*

I know that I shall again be gloomy and depressed and drag along a weary existence, but I have once soared into infinity and have felt a ray of eternity within me. That I shall never lose again. I should like to go to a convent, to some quiet, cloistered cell, where I might know nothing of the world, and could live on within myself until death shall call me. But it is not to be. I am destined to live on in freedom and to labor; to live with my fellow beings and to work for them.

The results of my handiwork and of my powers of imagination, belong to you; but what I am within myself, is mine alone.

*

I have taken leave of everything here; of my quiet room, of my summer bench; for I know not whether I shall ever return. And

if I do, who knows but what everything may have become strange to me?

*

(Last page written in pencil.)—It is my wish that when I am dead, I may be wrapped in a simple, linen cloth, placed in a rough, unplanned coffin, and buried under the apple tree, on the road that leads to my paternal mansion. I desire that my brother and other relatives may be apprised of my death at once, and that they shall not disturb my grave by the wayside.

No stone, no name, is to mark my grave.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

GUNTHER received his dismissal. Sated with his experience of the world, he withdrew from its distracting and bustling turmoil.

Old and endearing associations made it no easy matter for his family to transfer their affections to a new home—and yet the change was brought about without impairing their unity of feeling and affection. Those two pure gods, love and science, followed Gunther beyond the mountains and his heart was free from rancor.

Their home circle now was once more perfect. As if returning from a journey around the world, Gunther again found himself at the starting-point—for he knew that he and his would find a free and self-dependent life the source of the most ennobling and beautiful influences.

Naturally enough, they missed the presence of a cultured circle, its refining influences and the opportunity it affords for an interchange of ideas. But he felt that they would stand the test and would prove that they could give up all this without greatly missing it. Immediately after his dismissal, he received a most flattering offer of a professorship at one of the great universities. He declined the proffered position. It had been a long cherished idea of his, to improve his knowledge of certain branches of science and to complete certain scientific labors, of which he had thus far merely sketched the outlines. It often grieved him to think that he might quit the world, incomplete in himself and leaving much unfinished work behind him. Life at court, with its constant changes and interruptions, renders connected thought impossible. To mount guard every morning, in full armor; to be ready, at a moment's call, to discuss even the most important subject, in a light conversational manner:—such a life, if persisted in for a number of years, will, in spite of every effort to the contrary, tend to injure one's inner nature.

Fortunately for Gunther, scientific studies and home influences always lent him new vigor. But he was often alarmed lest he should fritter away his life and gradually lose his individuality. To a certain extent, he was perfectly willing to be uninformed; he even admitted that it was both necessary and pleasing, since it represented a remnant of that mental and political discipline which combines

and utilizes individuals who were otherwise incongruous and scattered. But, at the same time, Gunther endeavored to prevent any change in himself. He would often, and with special stress, remark that he who suffers any of his essential traits to be thus changed has been subdued and killed by the world, and has ceased to exist as himself.

When, with each succeeding day, he presented himself at court, he came, as it were, from a strange and distant sphere. And it was this which accounted for the severe and almost unbending manner, so often observed in him. He was, nevertheless, forbearing towards the superficiality and the mere desire to please, which he encountered at court, for he well knew that where strength of character or depth of culture do not feed the spring of life, there must needs be some provision for every passing hour, and also an inevitable tendency to make all life centre about the daily affairs of a small and exclusive circle.

Gunther's so-called inflexibility also lay in the fact that he never misplaced the centre of gravity, and thus, when the prop seemed withdrawn, he could yet stand his ground firmly and had no need to seek for strength from without. And now, when the sudden, but by no means unexpected, rupture took place, it was easy enough to lay aside the privy councilor and remain the doctor. He had soon mastered every trace of ill-feeling produced by his great and sudden fall. He regretted to leave his many friends at the capital, and the queen especially. He knew that he could still have been of great benefit to her; "but then," said he to himself, "it will be far better for her to seek and gain strength from herself, and without the aid of others."

Thus Gunther left the capital, and, in doing so, realized a lifelong wish to return to his native town.

He had almost attained his seventieth year, and looked upon the remnant of life yet accorded him as a peaceful evening of rest—the reward of a well-spent manhood. He desired, as far as possible, to close his accounts with knowledge, in order that night should not overtake him, while so much was as yet incomplete.

Some years ago, Gunther had built a modest house in his native town, and had intended it as a summer retreat for his family, while his children were still young. And now this house was to serve as a resting-place for the remainder of his life. Madame Gunther and the children had cheerfully taken leave of their old associations. They bade farewell to friends who were near and dear to them. But their life lay in their home, and this home, with all its visible and invisible treasures, accompanied them to their new abode.

Gunther's sister was the only relative he possessed in the little Highland town. She was an active, bustling hostess. The father, who had been a country physician, died while Gunther was studying at the university. Wilhelm had ever been the idol of the fam-

ily, and the sister—as well as the mother, up to the time of her death—had always regarded him as a sort of daring and successful navigator. With the assistance of her grown-up sons and daughters, the sister had put their new dwelling to rights. Gunther's charming home soon became the centre of attraction in the little town, and was, in its way, almost as important as the royal palace at the capital.

Esteem and gratitude were the invisible sentries who guarded the house. The respectful manner in which visitors entered it proved that naught but good-breeding dare cross that threshold.

Gunther's sister, the hostess of the Rose, reaped new honors and when, within a short time of each other, her two sons and one daughter became betrothed, it was deemed an inestimable piece of good fortune to become connected with the family of the privy councilor. Every stranger who visited the town was speedily informed of this eminent citizen and of his charming household.

A peaceful atmosphere reigned in Gunther's house. It seemed a very temple of science and beauty. It was difficult to decide whether it was more delightful in summer or in winter. In summer there was, of course, less chance to note how familiar its inmates were with all that tends to adorn home life. If the gardens in the neighborhood were less neatly arranged, their seats less comfortable and cozy, the points from which views could be obtained less artistically chosen—their hedges and trees were of just as bright a green and the prospect just as fine. But in winter, when man adorns his home, and when he has naught about him but the little world which he has himself shaped and arranged, then and then only, can we see what a lovely home may be created by those whose light and warmth are derived from themselves.

If a half-frozen traveler, descending from the snowy mountains, had been at once conducted to Gunther's home, he would have imagined that he had landed upon an oasis of civilization.

Salve! was the inscription over the doorway. Architecturally, the building was an improvement on the usual country-house. The roof projected considerably, for it was necessary to prevent the snow from piling itself before the windows; but this protecting roof was decorated with tasteful carvings. The steps were covered with winter plants, the walls were decorated with plaster copies from the Parthenon, the rooms were neatly arranged, and every piece of furniture properly placed. There were also finely engraved copies of the choicest paintings and, alternating with them, statuettes of the great men of all ages. On every hand, there were marble, plaster, or bronze works of art which had been sent to the celebrated physician by his admirers, and principally by those of the fair sex. Two stuffed bears, which had been sent to him by a Russian princess and served as foot-stools, had been quite the talk of the town.

The rooms were never excessively warm. The temperature was a comfortable one, in which men and plants could thrive. Large leaf-plants were placed at the windows and in the corners of the room. There was also a marble bust of Gunther, made by Irma's teacher, years ago. It was standing on a console and was surrounded by flowers.

Gunther was famous as a ladies' doctor and was thus in correspondence with many ladies of the higher classes. During the summer, some of these would occasionally visit the little town, for the sake of consulting him, and would sometimes prolong their stay beyond the time intended. The hostess of the Rose had fitted up two houses adjoining her own, and had put them in charge of two of her children, subject, of course, to her own careful supervision. And here the invalid visitors dwelt, while under treatment. Gunther gave a large share of his practice to a young physician who had married the second daughter of his sister, but retained the general superintendence in his own hands.

The little town blessed its distinguished and beneficent citizen. The best of everything always found its way to Gunther's house. Choice fish, the best game, early vegetables, and the finest fruit were brought there, and Madame Gunther was at some trouble to prevent people from overstocking the house. Even their servants were held in honor. Since they moved into the town, they had not once changed their domestics, who were constantly endeavoring to make themselves more useful and obliging. Even the dog and the mule which Gunther had procured for his mountain trips, were regarded with pleasure by the citizens.

CHAPTER II.

IT was in the early spring.

Madame Gunther and her two daughters were sitting by the window and working. A light-haired little girl, nearly five years old, was playing on the floor, and the three ladies often regarded it with affectionate glances. Aunt Paula seemed to be her favorite, and most of the child's questions were addressed to her.

Change of residence had made no alteration in Madame Gunther. She was still as dignified and refined as of yore, and, as her friends at the capital had been wont to say, every dress she wore seemed as if she had put it on for the first time.

The professor's widow had grown somewhat stouter, and Paula, who had grown in height, was the youthful image of her mother.

"May I call grandfather now?" asked little Cornelia, who noticed that the round table in the centre of the room had been set for the second breakfast.

"Not yet, but right soon," replied Paula.

Gunther was still in his working-room. It was furnished simply,

provided with a small but choice library, and embellished with appropriate bronzes. Gunther's dress, while at his work-table, was as scrupulously neat as if he expected to be summoned to court at any moment. He invariably rose at five o'clock, all the year round, and had done a full day's work when others were just commencing the day. It was only in unavoidable and exceptional cases that he allowed himself to be disturbed during the morning.

He wrote a great deal. It was rumored at the capital that he was engaged in preparing his memoirs, and he might, had he cared to do so, have had much to tell; for who was so familiar as he with the secret history of the last and the present government? But he felt it his duty to write of other matters. He endeavored to construct a science of life, using the combined results of the study of nature and practical knowledge of the world, as a basis. A slight glow would mantle his cheeks, and his eyes would involuntarily gaze into the far distance, when some difficult problem, which had hitherto eluded his grasp, became clear to his mental vision. At such moments, he would, as if impelled by an inner force, rise from his seat, and his chest would heave with emotion, at the thought that he was laying bare the secret springs of character and habit, with as much indifference to side considerations as if he were engaged on a physiological preparation.

The view from Gunther's windows, each of which consisted of a single plate of glass, extended to the distant mountains. Far up the heights, there was a small clearing, scarcely visible to the naked eye. Naught was noticeable but a small break in the woods, and, although it was known that the freehold lay there, its broad acres were out of sight. Irma had been sitting up there, working and brooding over her troubles, for nearly four years, while Gunther, in the meanwhile, had been sitting at his oaken table, writing his "Contributions to the Science of Life." His glance often rested on the distant heights, but he little dreamt that, while he was calmly gathering the fruits of his experience, another soul up there was spending its strength in the vain endeavor to solve the enigma of life.

When he dwelt on the difficulty of assigning to nature and education their relative share in determining conduct and character, hundreds of varied pictures would present themselves to his imagination. In all these investigations, the dead and the living were as one. The only question he asked himself was: To what extent do they exemplify the eternal idea? Eberhard's form would often appear to him; sometimes, in all the dewy freshness of youth; at others, in its last, sad aspect. Irma was also summoned by the spirit of knowledge and, although never mentioned by name, was made to illustrate the present disturbed state of the public mind.

That day, many of Gunther's thoughts had been of Irma.

There was a gentle knock at the door. His grandchild entered,

and Gunther's countenance brightened at the sight of her. For hours, his thoughts had been of grand abstractions, of past memories and of general laws, and now, blithe and cheerful childhood saluted him. He went into the sitting-room with his granddaughter.

The family seated themselves at the table. Letters and newspapers were left untouched until after the meal was finished.

"Did Adolph set out punctually?" enquired Gunther.

He received a full and explicit answer. Gunther's son, who owned the chemical works at the capital, had been visiting his parents for several days. He had left that morning, but Gunther had said "good-bye," the evening before. It was a peculiar, but well-weighed custom of his, to avoid the excitement of the hour of parting. They had many visitors, for their house was, in the best sense of the word, a hospitable one; but Gunther would suffer nothing to disturb him during the morning hour.

It was a merry breakfast party. Paula remarked that spring had surely come, for the wood-carver, who lived in the neighborhood, had thrown his old felt shoes out of the window, and that this was even a surer token than the coming of the swallows.

After breakfast, Gunther took up his letters, carefully examining the address and postmark of each, and arranging them in the order in which they were to be read.

The first one he opened bore the seal of the state department. It was from Bronnen who, since his elevation to the highest office under the government, had kept up a regular correspondence with his old friend Gunther, and had, indeed, twice visited him in his new home.

Gunther's face brightened while he read the letter. After he had finished it, he quietly laid it aside and said:

"Friend Bronnen intends to pay us a visit shortly."

Paula turned away quickly, and bent down to kiss her little niece. Although Gunther was still reading, her movement did not escape his notice. After he had looked through the rest of his letters, he took up the newspapers. He was in a thoughtful mood, and would now and then ask Paula to read certain passages aloud to him.

"One often wishes," said he, "—that is, I have often heard others express the desire—to be able, after death, to look down upon the world again. It is a mere phrase, however, which seems deep only to those who have not weighed it properly. All that we possess, see, or understand, lies in the world in which we live and move."

The remark seemed a singular one, and Paula was about to follow it up with a question, when a sign from her mother hinted that she had better not. The idea had evidently separated itself from a chain of reasoning which had engaged the mind of the solitary philosopher.

"You will have to answer several letters for me," said Gunther to Paula, who acted as his secretary. "Come along!"

He was about to leave the room, when a special messenger arrived with a letter for him. It was written in blue ink and was from the queen. Gunther opened it and read as follows :

". . . April 5th.

"Your letter seems laden with fresh mountain breezes. If I were not afraid lest you might deem it inconsistent with the dignity of the subject, I should request you to give me the summary of your philosophy of life, in an epistolary form. What cannot be given in that way, has not yet acquired communicable shape. In a letter we have the effect of the personal presence of the writer. And believe me, for I know of what I speak, you cannot imagine how much your ideas lose in impressiveness, when you thus, as it were, put them away from yourself and cause it to seem that another might have said the self-same thing. A letter has a voice of its own, and, while I write, I am reminded that your friend Horace wrote letters in verse and that the apostles also availed themselves of the epistolary form.

"Your remark that the myriad forms of life which you have from time to time beheld, now throng about your bark as if it were Charon's, has made me quite uncomfortable. I cannot imagine that you are only leading us into the realms of darkness. The problem before you is the knowledge of life. I must have misunderstood your meaning. I suppose that you are treating each group or epoch, as if it were an individual and that, with delicate touch; you note its every pulsation.

"It is quite charming to think that you can even find place for my modest doings in the grand march of human development. I am well aware that my interest in beneficent institutions is episodical and incomplete; and yet my whole heart is enlisted in their behalf. And this I owe to you. We know how small and imperfect our life is, but we must aim at greatness and perfection, and can best contribute to it by faithfully discharging the small duties that lay near at hand. Working for others rescues one from introspection, and thus expands the mind. When busied with self-contemplation, we are apt to put either too flattering, or too disparaging an estimate upon ourselves. It is only by what we are able to accomplish that we can really measure our value. I often ask myself whether I should ever have realized all this, if I had remained possessed of perfect happiness. My bent lay in another direction. I had a taste, and perhaps some talent, for the cultivation of the beautiful, and aimed to adorn life with festivals. Fate has decreed otherwise and it is well. There should be no feasting, while there is so much suffering to alleviate. I felt so happy while wearing the one crown—and now I must bear the other willingly.

"I was, at first, pleased with your remark that the lists of the members of beneficent institutions are the only true church record of modern times ; but, on second thought, I could not help finding that you free thinkers are terrorists as well. The church has rights, too, as long as she is willing modestly to place herself side by side with other educational and charitable institutions, and accord them equal rights with herself.

"As patron of various charitable institutions, I have been brought into personal contact with ladies of the middle class, and find many of them exceptionally cultured and well-bred. As you can readily imagine, it cost quite an effort to get some burgher names to be used for more than mere show. Minister Bronnen has been of great assistance to me. My committee for the blind asylum includes a charming Jewess, Madame —, who is just as modest as she is firm and decided in character. I think you once mentioned her to me.

"At the last examination of the blind, I was quite indignant at the clergyman, who referred to their fate as a wise dispensation of Providence. The only way in which I could show my displeasure at this piece of unctuous barbarism, was to ignore his presence.

"I read much religious history, and when I review past ages, I feel as if sitting by the waterfall which we have so often looked at together. The stream flows unceasingly and, though the water is ever changing, its source and its channel are ever the same. Its waves and its eddies remain in the same place ; the rocky masses, where they were on the day of their creation. In time, the rocks become covered with mosses and flowers, and in the course of many thousand years, new channels become hollowed out by the gradual action of the waters or by some sudden convulsion of nature. Such is the course of history. We are mere drops flowing down the foaming, bubbling stream.

"I observe that I have left several of your enquiries unanswered. You express a wish to learn my views of the various charitable institutions. But here I experience both the advantages and the disadvantages of my position. I am never quite sure whether my visit has not been announced in advance and prepared for. The advantage of my position, however, is, that the poor and unfortunate are rendered happy by my very presence, or by a few words from me. Yes, the first duty of those who are so highly favored, is to be kind to the unfortunate. But there is one thought that ever disturbs me. It is both right and necessary, and perhaps expedient, that these children should be educated and cared for in common—but this method unfortunately deprives them of that which most strengthens the young soul:—solitude.

"You find that I have become cheerful, and you hope that it may be something more than a passing mood. I myself believe that the key note of my inner life has changed from a minor to a major

mood, but the great dissonance still remains. Do not, I beg of you, imagine that I encourage this feeling. I have a right to claim that the great precept: 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,' expresses my inner nature. I understand it thus:—if there be aught in your desires and efforts which might harm yourself or the world, be unmerciful towards yourself, and, instead of regarding it as an essential element of your being, pluck it out.

"But, my friend, I cannot find the offense. I must bear the one great sorrow of my life. How often I long for deliverance! He, too, suffers, and doubly, because of his guilt. The thought often overwhelms me, and, even now, while I write these lines, I shudder—for the shadow of death stands between us. How can it be exorcised?"

"April 6th.

"I have not yet thanked you for that which is best in your letter. That you, too, are delighted with the free and consistent changes in the government, affords me great comfort. I read much that is good about the new rule, but I read and heard just as much in praise of the old, and there are many who maintain that there has been no break, and that, although the key is changed, the tune is still the same.

"What makes human beings take such a pride in never changing?"

"But, never mind; as long as the good and the right are brought about, it matters not.

"Those who form our immediate circle look upon the disbanding of the guard as an actual revolution. I have just begun to realize that it formed a privileged caste, which, although we scarcely knew of its existence, had come to be looked upon as a matter of course.

"Do you remember my once asking you whether there are any really happy beings on earth? Your life is the answer to my question and your greatest happiness lies in the fact that you have no false part to perform, nothing which is opposed to your judgment and convictions.

"I now see my error in regarding your mode of thought as the philosophy of solitude. You hold fast to the harmony of life. But I have not yet rid myself of a fear lest that which is real should, as it were, become volatilized, causing the living forms of the vast human multitude to disappear. In that case, the spirit alone would remain, or, if I understand aright, would lose itself in matter, when all individuality and all participation in actual life would cease.

"I cannot help interesting myself in individual inmates of these institutions. I can help the cause as a whole, but I can only love individuals.

"I am greatly comforted by one piece of information you give me:—that, in all history, there is no age that was satisfied with itself. We fondly dream of a golden age, but the golden age is to-day or never.

"But now as to matters that concern us more nearly. You ask me to tell you of my little Woldemar. I do so with pleasure, but must be careful not to weary you with a thousand and one of his little sayings and traits. I follow your advice and endeavor to interest myself in his questions, instead of teaching him that which he does not care to know. He is quite decided, both in his likes and dislikes. I think that this is well and let him have his own way. His disposition is, to a marked degree, that of the king; he is quite fond of music. I think it good for him that he was, literally speaking, sung to while in his cradle, although the songs were from the lips of such hypocritical specimens of culture and simplicity. Ah, my dear friend, that one sad memory still casts its dark shadow over all my thoughts and all that I behold."

"April 7th.

"And now this tiresome letter is nearly at an end. We are coming to you my dear friend. Woldemar and I, I and Woldemar.

"I told Woldemar, and he at once added in a decided tone:

"'But Schnipp and Schnapp' (his two ponies) 'must go, too.'

"To be brief—the king has granted my request. For the benefit of my health, I may pay you a visit of four weeks during midsummer and take Woldemar with me. Orders have already been given, and Minister von Bronnen has, I understand, made all the necessary arrangements to have the dairy-farm in your neighborhood prepared for a small suite.

"This year, we shall walk together, on Goethe's birthday.

"But my letter is long enough already, and I shall not begin another sheet. If, as I am willing to admit, you really possess a power over your native mountains, let them be bright and cloudless, while welcoming to you and yours, your friend,

"MATHILDE.

"Postscript.—Bronnen has visited you. He had much to tell me, and when I enquired about your youngest daughter, his features seemed to betray his emotion. Was I mistaken? Remember me to your wife and children. I trust that the queen's presence will not embarrass them."

CHAPTER III.

IT seems as if, even in the quietest life, there are days in which the whole world has, as it were, agreed that visits and interruptions should never cease.

Gunther was in his room and had scarcely had time to compose himself, after reading the queen's letter. It was evident, he thought, that the king designed to bring about a reconciliation between himself and his consort, through the agency of the dismissed friend. Gunther was willing to aid him in this, but not to have the even tenor of his life interfered with. The queen's hint in

regard to Bronnen accorded with his own observations, and just then he could hear Paula singing—for the first time this year by the open window—and her voice seemed expressive of a bridal mood. He felt that Paula deserved to be happy and that her marriage with his exalted friend would best promote the happiness of both. But he was firmly resolved, even in that event, never again to leave his birthplace.

Buried in thought, Gunther was sitting in his room.

The servant announced the freeholder's wife.

"No—Walpurga!" cried a voice, and before the servant could bring the answer, Walpurga had entered the room.

"Ah, dear Doctor, you're our neighbor! I heard, only a minute ago, that you were living here, and it's scarcely four hours' walk from our farm. Yes, that's the way people live hereabouts: alone and away from each other, just as if one were dead."

She offered her hand to Gunther, but he was busily engaged in gathering up some papers, and enquired:

"Does your mother still live?"

"Alas! no. Oh, if she had only lived to see Doctor Gunther once more! Who knows whether she would n't be living yet, if we could have called you when she was sick."

Walpurga wept at the remembrance of her mother. Gunther seated himself and asked:

"What is it you want?"

"How? What?" asked Walpurga, quickly, drying her tears.

"And you never once ask how it fares with me?"

"You're prosperous and have changed but little."

"May I sit down?" asked Walpurga, in an anxious voice. This cold reception from one who had always been so kind to her, affected her so deeply that she could scarcely stand. She looked about her as if bewildered, and at last said:

"And is there nothing more you want to ask me? Where I live and how my husband and children are?"

"Walpurga," said Gunther, rising from his seat, "lay aside your old acting."

"What? acting? I do n't know what you mean! What have I to do with acting?"

"That does not concern us now. Did you want to ask me anything? or have you anything to tell me?"

"To be sure; that's just why I came."

"What is it?"

"Yes; but you seem so strange that my thoughts are quite mixed up. Hansei does n't know that I've come here, and not another soul in the world is to know about it but yourself. I can keep a secret; I have kept one. I can be trusted."

"I know it," said the physician, in a hard voice.

"You know it? How? You can't know it, and I shan't tell

you all of it, either. I might have told you, but after such a reception, I can't."

"Do as you please; speak or be silent; but cut it short, for I have very little time."

"Then I'd rather come some other time."

"I can't receive you for mere talk. Tell me now what you have to say."

"Well then, Doctor—Oh, dear me, to think that you do n't even shake hands with me. I can't get over it. But I see, that 's the way it is with great folk; it's all the same—thank God, I know where I'm at home!"

"Cease your empty talk!" said Gunther, interrupting her still more sharply. "What have you to tell me? Can I help you in any way?"

"Me? Thank God, nothing ails me. I only wanted to say that under-forester Steingassinger lives out on the dairy-farm, and that his wife is my friend and companion, Stasi. Early last winter, she told me that the king was coming here this summer, and all I wanted to say was that if he cares to pay me a visit at the freehold, he's quite welcome. I might have said something more, but I see I'd better not. I'd rather not break an oath."

Gunther nodded.

"If the king wishes to pay you a visit, I will tell him what you have said."

"And is n't our dear, good queen coming, too? I've often been kept awake at nights by anger and sorrow, when I thought that she does n't concern herself about me. And she promised me so solemnly that she would. I can't understand how it is; but it's all right, I suppose. And how is the little prince? And is it true that you are not in favor and have been dismissed from the court? And is that why you are living here in this little house?"

Gunther gave her an evasive reply, and said: that he had other matters to attend to.

Walpurga arose from her seat, but could not move from the spot. She could not understand why she should be treated thus, and it was only because she had previously made up her mind to do so, that she invited Gunther to visit her, and asked permission to see Madame Gunther for a few moments. She hoped that she, at least, would receive her kindly and afford her some explanation of the Doctor's repellant manner.

"Go to her," replied Gunther, turning away and taking up a book. Walpurga left the room.

She stopped in the passageway and asked herself whether she was not dreaming. She who had once been the crown prince's nurse was now treated as if they had never known her. She, the freeholder's wife—her pride rose, as she thought of her vast homestead—was sent away like a beggar.

She no longer cared to speak with Madame Gunther. Her lips trembled with grief at the thought of how wicked the great people were. And yet they could praise this house, and she, too, had once praised it, as though none but holy persons lived in it.

She left the house, and, while walking through the garden, met Madame Gunther, who started back when she recognized Walpurga.

"Do n't you remember me?" asked Walpurga, holding out her hand towards her.

"Indeed I do," said Madame Gunther, without noticing the hand that was offered her. "Where do you come from?"

"From my farm. I'm the freeholder's wife and if you, Madame, had come to me, I would n't have let you stand out of doors in this way; I'd have asked you to come inside, into my room."

"But I do n't ask you," replied Madame Gunther, "I put nothing in the way of those who leave the straight path, but I do not invite them into my house."

"And when did I leave the straight path? What have I done?"

"I am not your judge."

"Any one may judge me. What have I done? You must tell me."

"I must not; but I will. You will have to answer to yourself how all the money was earned with which you bought your great farm. Good day!"

She went into the house.

Walpurga stood there, alone. The houses, the mountains, the woods, the fields—all swam before her, and her eyes were filled with bitter tears.

Gunther had been looking out of the window, during Walpurga's interview with his wife, and, by the manner of the latter, felt satisfied that the peasant woman had been told some unpleasant truths. He now saw Walpurga walk away; she would stop now and then, and dry her tears with her apron. The woman repents, at any rate, thought he to himself, and she's only another proof of the far-reaching and all-corroding effects of evil.

It was long before Gunther could be made to believe that Walpurga had received a large sum of money in return for wicked services, but it had been judicially proven that the farm had been paid for in new coin, such as only passes through princely hands. And just because Gunther had believed in Walpurga's simple true-heartedness, and had staked his word upon it, he was all the more embittered against her.

He was resolved to clear up the matter as soon as the opportunity offered.

CHAPTER IV.

PROUD and happy as Walpurga had been when she left home in the morning, it was with a heavy heart that she returned at evening.

She might well be proud, for no farmer's wife could present a better appearance. Franz, the late cuirassier, had broken in the foal. It was harnessed to the little Bernese wagon and looked around as if pleased when Walpurga came out, dressed in her Sunday clothes and accompanied by Burgei. Hansei helped his wife into the wagon and then gave her the child.

"Come back safe and sound," said he, "and Franz, take care of the horse."

"Never fear!" was Franz's answer, and the horse started off at a lively gait, as if it were mere child's play to draw such a load.

Hansei stood looking after his wife and child for awhile and then turned about and went off to his work. He only nodded to Irma, who was looking out of her window, and waving a farewell to Walpurga.

Walpurga rode off, holding her hand to her heart, as if to repress the joy with which it was overflowing.

What was there better in the world than a well-arranged household, like the one she was just leaving, and to feel, moreover, that the people she met would know that she was well-to-do in the world? But Walpurga was proud of something else which the people could not see.

She had, with great circumspection, arranged quite a difficult affair.—On the following morning, Irma was to go to the shepherd's hut, and all danger of discovery would be averted. It is no trifling matter to keep such a secret a whole winter, for Irma had judged rightly. Walpurga encouraged Irma's plan of spending the entire summer in deeper solitude. Stasi, whose husband had heard it from the chief forester, told her that the king intended to visit the neighboring village during the following summer. She feared for Irma, and now her fears had taken a still more decided shape. Stasi's husband had been removed to the dairy-farm and had been ordered to arrange the forest paths and drives, preparatory to the king's arrival.

Hansei was quite willing that his wife, instead of going to the neighboring village, should go to a more distant town, in order to purchase the articles of use and comfort which it would be necessary for Gundel and Irma to take with them to the shepherd's hut. This afforded her an opportunity to fulfill her promise to visit Stasi in her new home. He even consented that Burgei should go along. And thus Walpurga drove off, her heart full of happiness, and with a kindly smile of greeting for all whom she met on the road.

"I only wish," said Franz, "that we could drive along the lake,

and by our old village, for we all came from there; you and L. Bui-gei and the horse."

Franz had bestowed especial care upon his appearance. His face beamed with joy, for he, too, cherished a secret thought. He intended to buy a silver ring to place on Gundel's finger, before she went to the shepherd's hut.

"Be careful of that horse," replied Walpurga. "He's so very young. What a fine day it is. The cherries down here are n't in blossom yet, and the sapling we brought from home is blossoming. Jay, for the first time. Did n't you see it?"

"No."

They drove on in silence.

When they drew near to the village in which Stasi lived, Franz, who drove about the country a good deal, said:

"This pretty brook flows from up near our new meadow. It comes out of the rocks scarcely a rifle-shot from there."

Walpurga smiled at the thought that a stream that flowed far through the country, had its source on her own land. Yes, no one knows what fortune may have in store for him.

Stasi was delighted at Walpurga's arrival, and was lavish in her praise of all that belonged to her friend. She declared that the king himself had not a finer horse, a better behaved servant, a lovelier child or a better wife, than Hansei had. Wherever she took Walpurga, the laborers who were clearing the roads, or building bridges, would stop for awhile to look at the farmer's handsome wife and the child who, both in dress and feature, was the very picture of her mother.

Stasi prepared an excellent meal. Walpurga had brought, as a gift, enough butter and eggs to last for a great while. In the new inspector's dwelling, as great honor was shown Walpurga as if she were the queen herself.

At last, Walpurga set about making her purchases, and showed that she was sensible and aware of what her position required. She always bought the best of everything and did not higggle long about the price.

They had returned to the dairy-farm, and Walpurga was on the point of confiding a portion of her secret to Stasi, so as to put her on her guard as to the king, when she heard of the distinguished man who, for nearly four years past, had been living in the little town.

"Dear me! why he's the best friend I have!" said Walpurga. She handed the child to Stasi and hurried off to Gunther's house. She felt as if her heart would burst with joy, and was obliged to sit down before the house, for awhile, to get her breath.

But while she walked back to the farm, she did not once raise her eyes from the ground. She could not. And what annoyed her most of all was that she had told Stasi: "He's the best friend I have."

They expected her to tell about her visit, but all she could say was :

"Do n't ask me to tell you what great folks are. If I were to begin I could n't get through before to-morrow, and I've got to go, or it 'll be dark before we get home."

Walpurga became quieter and sadder, the more Stasi and her husband praised Doctor Gunther. She dared not tell what had happened to her. This is all you get, thought she, if you depend on the respect which others are to show you. Long after she had left them, Stasi and her husband spoke of how strange and changeable Walpurga was. But she was glad that she was no longer obliged to look any one in the face. And now, at this late day, she was reminded of something that she had long since forgotten. "Oh, dear mother!" said she aloud to herself. "You were right. Everything in this world must be paid for, and now the gold is to be paid for—but how?"

She seated her child upon her lap as though it was all that was left to her. She hugged and kissed it and, at last, it fell asleep, resting upon her heart. She grew calmer, although she keenly felt the wrong that had been done her and wondered what might yet be in store for her. When, while in her old home, the envy and enmity of the villagers had annoyed her, she could easily console herself with the fact that they were simple, ignorant people; but what could she say now? Was she to experience her old troubles over again? And there was no one to whom she could confide them; her mother was gone; she could not tell Hansei and, least of all, Irmgard.

It was twilight when she at last caught a glimpse of home. Mustering up all her courage, she said to herself:

"The best thing I can do, is to let suspicion rest on me until I die, or till she dies; for then no one will come near us, and I need n't have any fear for my dear Irma, who has far more to bear than I have. Thank God, I did n't betray my secret; and how lucky it is, she's now going up into the wilds where no one will find her."

Full of courage, she went into the house and told Hansei of her visit to Stasi, but nothing more.

"I have borne it alone, thus far," said she to herself. "I'll do so, hereafter."

With great self-command, she assumed a cheerful air while with Hansei and Irma, and romped with her boy, for whom she had bought a little wooden horse.

CHAPTER V.

THE evening of preparation was an unquiet one. Hansei, who had much to do, would again and again busy himself with the cow-bells, the tones of which pleased him greatly. He had pur-

chased a well-tuned set and Irma had praised them, when he showed them to her.

They went to bed early, for, on the next morning, they would have to rise long before daybreak.

Hansei, who had been asleep for some time, awoke and heard Walpurga crying and sobbing.

"For God's sake! what's the matter?"

"Oh, if mother were only living!" said Walpurga. "If I only still had my mother!"

"Do n't act so. Do n't cry, now; it's sinful!"

"What? A sin to mourn for my mother?"

"It all depends on how you mourn. I've often heard it said that, so long as grass has n't grown over the grave, you may weep for the dead without doing harm to them or the living. After that, there should be no more weeping for the dead; for, as the old proverb says: 'It wets their clothes in the other world.' Do n't fall into sinful ways, Walpurga. Your mother lived out her time, and thus it is in the world. Parents must die before their children, and, although I trust that our children won't forget us when we're gone, I hope they'll be able to think of us without weeping. But now—Why do you let me talk so much? Am I right, or wrong? What makes you so silent?"

"Yes, yes; it's all right. But do n't, I beg of you, ask me anything more now. My head is full of all sorts of thoughts. Good night."

"Good night, and do n't forget to say 'good night' to your idle thoughts."

A fleeting smile passed over Walpurga's face at Hansei's kind words, but in the next moment she was again a prey to sad despair and a feeling of utter loneliness. She had wept for her mother, because she alone could have shared Irma's secret with her; but now, when a new and crushing burden oppressed her, there was no living one who could help her.

She suddenly recalled the evening when she had stood in the palace yard, feeling as if she had been transported into the heart of the enchanted mountain, and awed by the dimly lighted statues that seemed to be staring at her. She had come away, bringing golden treasure with her; but what had clung to it? Resentment at the injustice she had experienced gnawed at her heart. "That's the way with the great folk," she muttered, between her teeth. "They condemn without a hearing. I could justify myself, but I won't do it."

"Perhaps you'd rather Irmgard would n't move out to the hut?" asked Hansei, after a while.

"Why, I thought you were asleep, long ago," answered Walpurga. "Good night, again."

She asked herself how it would be if Hansei were to learn what

was said of her. How would he bear it? And was n't it wonderful that, thus far, nothing had been heard of it?

All her pride in the good opinion of others suddenly turned into shame. The peculiar gift she possessed of imagining what people were saying and thinking, again tormented her, and everything seemed confused, as if a half-waking dream.

She determined to lighten her heart by pouring out her woes to Irma. She sat up in bed and felt for her clothes, but she quickly checked the impulse. How could she inflict this on the penitent? Irma had sufficient strength of mind to renounce everything, and even to let the world regard her as dead. How trifling was Walpurga's trouble in comparison with hers!—And was not the queen also an innocent sufferer? Was not one obliged to suffer for another, all the world through?

She felt as if suddenly endowed with a strength she had never before known. She was willing to suffer for Irma, and even to sacrifice her own good name, for the sake of protecting the penitent.

She thanked fate that Doctor Gunther had treated her unkindly. How would it have been if a friendly reception on his part had induced her to betray a portion of her secret?

The elements that mingled in Walpurga's character were now in agitation, now in repose; the quiet life at home, the unquiet one at court, vanity, honor, humility, a desire to appear of consequence—all these were in a constant ferment. But at last all was clear.

"What have you done for Irma, after all?" she asked herself. "Nothing; you've only let her live with you."

For Irma's sake, she was willing to submit to disgrace.

"It is n't what people think of you, but what you really are, that's most important," thought she to herself, and breathed freely once more.

When she, at last, calmly rested her head on her pillow, she felt as if her mother's hand were stroking her brow.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was a mild spring night.

Irma was sitting by the spring and looking up at the starry heavens. She felt strangely at the thought of again wandering forth, for on the following morning she was to start for the shepherd's hut, there to spend the summer. How would it be with her when she again sat here in the night, listening to the stream rushing by?

At that moment she heard whispering. It seemed to come from the dark stable, the door of which was open.

"Yes, Gundel; our mistress is just as changeable as April weather. On the way from home, she was as jolly as she could be,

and on the way back, she was just as glum as if she'd been beaten. She went to see the great doctor. Something must have happened to her. But what does she matter to us, after all? She bought pots and pans, but I got something better. Let's have your hand. There! I put this little silver ring on your finger and make you fast to me, in soul and body, for life. Now you may go wherever you choose; you're mine, all the same."

Hearty kisses were heard, and Gundel at last said:

"But you'll come up to the meadow to see us, once in a while, won't you?"

"Of course I will!" And then there was more soft and unintelligible whispering.

"Why, just look!" said Franz, suddenly; "there's cousin Irmgard, and she's heard every word of what we've said."

"That's no harm; she knows all about it, and so I'll have something to talk with her about, all summer. Come, let's go to her. You'll see how kind she is."

They went to Irma.

She took them both by the hand and said:

"Let your love be as pure, as fresh, as inexhaustible as this spring." She dipped her hand into the spring, which glittered in the moonlight, and sprinkled the two lovers with water.

"That's as good as if it came out of a holy-water pot," cried Franz. "Now everything will be all right. I've no fear. You, spring, and you, elder tree, are witnesses that we both belong together, and will never leave each other. Good night."

Franz went back into the stable and closed the door. Gundel accompanied Irma to her room and slept on the bench, for her father, the little pitchman, had already gone before them to the shepherd's hut and had taken her bed and various household articles with him.

It was long before Irma fell asleep. She felt as if she could not help living over, in anticipation, the many days and nights she was to spend upon the mountain. She was restless, and lay there thinking, until at last her thoughts became confused and bewildered.

At last, she asked in a soft voice:

"Gundel, are you still awake?"

"Oh yes, and I'm sure Franz is awake, too. He is n't as well off as I am, and has no one to talk to as I have. Oh, how thankful I am to you! I'll make things as pleasant and as comfortable for you as I can. Oh, what a good, honest soul Franz is. Do you hear the cows lowing? They can't rest, either. I feel as if I could already hear the bells that they're going to wear to-morrow, and I think they must know all about it, too. Oh, Irmgard, if you only had a sweetheart, too. I know how it will be with you. It'll be just as it says in the story—and you deserve it, too. There was once upon a time a king who rode through the forest and found a

beautiful girl tending the flocks; and he put her on his horse, took her home with him, gave her clothes of gold, and put a diamond crown upon her head. And then the queen—O the bells, the queen—come, White-spot, the bells—come, come, come—and so—”

Gundel slept, but Irma lay awake and looked out into the moonlight. The whole world seemed a marvel, and vague fairy pictures filled her mind. She smiled, and her eyes sparkled until they were at last closed in sleep. But the smile rested on her features, although there was none to see it, save the moon, calmly looking down from on high.

CHAPTER VII.

WE often experience sadness and hesitancy in carrying out projects which have been wisely conceived and hopefully determined on. And thus it proved when the time came to set out for the shepherd's hut.

It was before daybreak. Irma stood at the open hearth in Walpurga's room, and shivered with the cold.

Although Irma had overcome all longings since her return from her short visit to the world, a new and deep feeling of homelessness had come over her, just as if this was the first day of her solitude. She often looked about her, as if she saw a figure approaching with a light bundle under its arm—and that figure was herself, but oh! how changed. She scarcely felt a desire for food or drink; nor did she care to speak. She lived entirely in and from herself. But, although silent, she was cheerful and kind towards every one.

The little pitchman was the first to note this change, and he was of the opinion that a summer spent on the mountain meadows would prove of great benefit to Irma, for he maintained that she was ill, although she always seemed well and was ever at work.

If everything had been specially arranged, Walpurga's purpose could not have been better served. Irma's wishes and the uncle's advice were in accord. Besides this, there was danger of discovery, on account of the king's visit to the neighboring village, and whatever danger lay in this, Walpurga meant to avert from Irma.

The morning found Walpurga gay and cheerful, as if after a hardly won victory. Her eyes often rested on Irma who was looking fixedly at the open hearth-fire.

“You'll see,” said she to her, “you'll be quite a different being up there. I can hear you singing already, and then we'll sing together again.”

She went on humming to herself the air

Oh! blissful is the tender tie
That binds me, love, to thee.

But Irma did not join in the song.

"I shall support life as long as it supports me," said Irma, as if speaking to herself, and holding her hands before the fire.

It was not long before the two women, who were thus standing quietly by the hearth, were called away to the stable outside. Everything was in readiness. The little pitchman, who was conversant with all such mysteries, had, on the previous day, arranged everything so that the cattle might be well and hearty in their new abode. He had brought a clod of earth and three ants from the meadow, and had mixed the earth with some sweet-scented clover, St. Johnswort, lavender and salt, into which mixture he dropped some oil of tar, and this was the last food given the cattle. The little pitchman had returned from the meadow during the night and, although he had not been asked to do so, had prepared the mysterious fodder in order to oblige Hansei, who was not yet quite familiar with the ways of this section of the country.

Now that the cattle had swallowed the magic potion, they were protected against all witchcraft and sickness, and would be as much at home on the meadows as if they had been born there. And now that day began to dawn, the cows became unmanageable. Peter sprinkled every one of them with holy water; but in spite of charms and holy water, these tame, domestic creatures seemed to have been converted into wild beasts. All was confusion within the enclosure that confined them, the cows were bellowing and running about wildly, and, in the midst of the din, was heard the shouting of the cowboys. The little pitchman bade them let the cows have their own way and at last they were quiet. Gundel put the wreath on the horns of the large brown bell-cow, and fastened the leader's bell around her neck. The other cows were also provided with bells. And now the leader was surrounded by the rest of the herd, who glared at her furiously; but she seemed so proud and scornful that none ventured to challenge her.

"And now let's be off, for God's sake!" cried the little pitchman, opening the gate. The procession started. Franz came last of all, holding the powerful red bull by its strong short horns and dragged by, rather than leading it. As soon as the bull was out of the stable, he stood still and looked about him with quite a dangerous air, and then, tossing up his head, stepped off alone, in quite a dignified manner. But as soon as he was outside of the gate, he bellowed loudly.

Although everything had been quietly arranged, there was yet hurrying at the end. Walpurga and Hansei accompanied Irma for a part of the way.

Irma was silent. Her step was firm, and yet it seemed to her as if her will had nothing to do with this, and as if she were urged onward by another.

"You look more cheerful already," said Hansei to Irma.

A nod was her only reply.

They soon overtook the herd which had gone ahead. The herdsman had waited for them, for it would not do to drive the cattle through the village unless the *sennerin** were with them.

They might have taken the other road. It lay back of the village, and was somewhat shorter; but why should they not for once show themselves and their herds before they went into solitude? And so the cattle with their beautiful bells were driven through the village, while cheers and hurrahs resounded from all sides.

When they ascended the mountain on the other side of the village, and struck the forest road which Hansei had cut, he could not refrain from calling Irma's attention to what he had accomplished.

In the heart of the forest, where the royal arms were carved on the boundary-stone—for it was here that the royal preserves began—Hansei took leave of Irma. Walpurga, who had also said "good bye," still accompanied her for a short distance. There was so much that she wanted to tell Irma, and yet all she could say was: "Don't be afraid; I'll come to see you next Sunday. If you find it lonesome, come back to us again. Nobody forces you to stay up here; but if you can stay, you'll find it'll do you good."

Walpurga, whose heart was oppressed with her secret, bade Irma a hurried farewell and left her.

Hansei was sitting on the boundary-stone, waiting for his wife. After she had joined him, they walked on for some time in silence.

"It often seems to me as if it were all a dream," said he, at last. "We've been here four years, this coming autumn, and she's been with us all the time. I can't tell you how much I like her, and still I do n't know her; that is, I do know her, so to say, but I do n't know her after all."

"Stop a minute, Hansei," said Walpurga.

He stood still. All was silent in the woods. A thick mist had veiled the mountains, and the birds were mute. The only sound that broke upon the ear was that of the bells of the distant herd ascending the mountain. Walpurga drew a long breath.

"Hansei," said she, at last, "you've stood a hard test. I never would have believed that any man could have done what you have. And now I think I must open the door to you, at last."

"Stop!" said Hansei, interrupting her, "not so fast. Did she tell you to do so, of her own accord? Say 'yes' or 'no'."

"No."

* "He who goes up with the cattle into the mountains, during the good season, is a 'Senn.' In Switzerland, this is done by men; in the Eastern Alps, in the Bavarian highlands, and in Austria, generally by women—the 'Sennerin,' 'Almerin.'"

(The Alps—H. BERLEPSCH.)

"Then I do n't want to know anything about her. You hold her secret in trust, and no one has a right to touch it. Of course, to be honest with you, it has often puzzled me terribly. There's only one thing I want to know: I'm sure she has n't injured any one and she has n't stolen, has she? But no matter what she may have done, she's atoned for it all. Tell me only this: Has she any such trouble on her conscience?"

"God forbid! She's harmed no one on earth but herself."

"All right then; we'll say no more about it. Did you see how the deaf and dumb man in the village fell on his knees before her?"

"No."

"But I did; and I heard Babi, the root girl, say that the crazy woman from the farm would never come back again. Now Babi's crazy and Irmgard is n't, but still it frightened me. I do n't know—but it seems to me that our home will seem empty, if we do n't have Irmgard with us. She's become one of us."

When they had returned to the house and were sitting together in the front room, Hansei said:

"Do n't you remember how she advised me to place the table differently, and how she helped to arrange everything, and told uncle to shorten the legs of the chairs, so that they might fit better to the table? I've never seen a farmer's room that looked so beautiful as ours; and she was a great help to you in everything."

Hansei had much to arrange about the house, and Walpurga would often come to him, with one of the children, and exchange a few words with him, while at work. She did not care to be alone. She missed Irma, and yet was happy to know that she was safe in her lonely retreat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE day did not clear. At noon, the mist changed into heavy rain.

"I wonder if it rains as hard up there, too; she'll be terribly wet," thought Walpurga to herself, and, indeed, it was raining just as heavily up the mountain. Wild, rapid little streams ran across the road and bubbled and splashed down the mountain side.

With the aid of a mountain staff which Hansei had given her, Irma walked on courageously. To protect her against the rain, the little pitchman had given her his great woollen rug, in which there was only a hole to slip the head through. He managed to cover himself with empty corn sacks. He walked at her side, and often said:

"Shall I carry you?"

Irma walked on. The staff was of little use during the ascent; but, now and then, they had to go down a sharp declivity—a sink,

as the uncle called it—when she was obliged to plant it firmly and swing herself by it. The little pitchman was always at hand, ready to catch Irma, in case she should slip; but she had a firm step.

As the herd were not yet used to each other, it was quite difficult to keep them together; but the little pitchman knew how to manage the animals, and the bells, ringing merrily together, seemed like a constantly ascending melody.

"The cattle are well off," said the little pitchman, "they can find their fodder along the wayside. But the mistress has given me something for ourselves. We'll soon reach the 'Witch's Table,' and there we can sit under shelter, while we take a bite."

They soon came upon a broad, projecting rock, resembling a semicircular table. Here there was dry and sandy soil, where only the lion-ant dwelt, in his funnel-shaped cell. Gundel, Franz, the little pitchman and Irma sat down under shelter of the "Witch's Table" and ate heartily, while the cows, that grazed outside, were left in charge of one of the cowboys.

"The rain will last a long time," said Franz. The little pitchman called him to account, and said that no one could tell how long the rain would last. He wanted to encourage Irma.

He caught a lion-ant and showed how clever the little creature was; how it made a pitfall in the fine sand and hid itself at the point of its funnel-shaped cell, and how the common ant, unconscious of danger, would come along and tumble into the pit, from which it could not get out again; for the fine sand rolls away from under its feet, while the rogue who is hiding blinds the captive by throwing sand in its eyes, and then catches and eats it. "And strangest of all," said he, "next year that gray worm will be a brown dragon-fly on the lake."

He well knew that such a glimpse of nature was more pleasing to her than food or inspiring words.

With renewed vigor, they went still further up the mountain. As if invigorated by the herbage of the higher regions, the cattle became livelier. At last they drew near the clearing where the new meadow lay. The little pitchman instructed Franz to go on in advance and open the stable door. Franz obeyed at once; soon after that his call was heard, and the cows that had just reached the open meadow bellowed and rushed forward. The rain and mist were now so thick that the hut could not be distinguished until they were within a few steps of it. "That's lucky," cried the little pitchman, "the swallows have already built their nests on our cottage; now all is safe."

He stepped forward, knocked at the door three times, opened it, and offered his hand to Irma with the words: "Let joy enter and sorrow depart!" And thus they were home at last.

Oh, what a comfort to have a sheltering roof over one's head! Irma often looked up, and her eyes seemed to express the gratitude

she felt because of her being at last protected against the angry storm. Now that she was snugly housed in the cottage, it seemed far more gloomy out of doors than while they were trudging through the rain. There was soon a cheerful fire on the large hearth, and the little pitchman, muttering to himself, took something out of his pocket and threw it into the flames.

"Since the world began," said he, "no fire has ever been lighted here, and no smoke has arisen to heaven. We're the first inhabitants. But the swallows—yes, the swallows—that's lucky."

He might have said much more, if he had n't been called away by Franz, who came to tell him that a cow out in the stable had just calved.

Irma was alone with Gundel. She quickly undressed herself and dried and warmed herself by the fire. But Gundel was called away, too, so that she might know what to do on a like occasion in the future. And now Irma, divested of her outer clothing, sat by the fire. She felt chilled at first, but the sense of cold and of fear quickly left her. She gazed calmly at the cheerful fire—a solitary child of man, alone on the heights. She had completely forgotten where she was, until she heard voices approaching. She quickly covered herself with the dried clothes. The little pitchman entered and offered his congratulations on the fact that they had been blessed with a splendid steer-calf on the very first day.

Night came on. Franz took his departure. Gundel went with him part of the way and, until she returned, they could be heard calling to each other through the drizzling rain. The inmates of the cottage soon repaired to rest. The little pitchman and the cowboy slept in the hay-loft over the stable. Irma and Gundel slept in the house.

When they awoke, on the following morning, the day was still veiled in a thick mist. "We're in a cloud," said the little pitchman.

The cows were grazing. The bells seemed scattered about, and, in the distance, had a dreamlike sound as of the humming of bees.

Irma had hoped to be alone, and here she was shut up in this little hut with its few inmates. The little pitchman had said that they were the first dwellers on this bit of earth, and it seemed as if nature resented their advances. The wind howled and drove the clouds before it, but always brought fresh ones to replace them, and, now and then, were heard the crash and roar of falling avalanches.

Irma endeavored to work, but to no purpose.

The second night and the second day found them still enveloped in impenetrable clouds. Even the cattle seemed to complain of it, their lowing sounded so sorrowful.

It was early on the third morning, when Irma awoke, feeling as if something had touched her. She arose. A soft gleam of light

shone through the crevice in the window-shutter. The sun has awakened me," said she to herself. She hurriedly dressed and went out of doors.

The fresh and dewy air of morning revived her spirits. A cow, grazing near by, raised its head and looked at her, and then went on eating again.

A silver-gray light gradually dawned in the east, and that wonderful passage from Haydn's "Creation" flashed through Irma's mind. She fancied that the tones assumed tangible, corporeal shapes, arising out of the early gray of dawn. By degrees, the gray changed into a golden hue, and then faint streaks of red would flash through it, gradually heightening in color, while down below, stretching into the distance, like a dark and immeasurable stream, lay the darkness of night. At last, rugged cliffs, peaks, and broad mountain ridges raised their heads into the light, while their bases still lay veiled in night which was gradually changing into a dark gray. The rosy tint gradually extended and gained in intensity until it covered the heavens. Meanwhile, the giant forms of the mountains stood forth more clearly and at last, dazzling the eyes, the sun appeared, bathing every height in purple and golden hues, while the rolling clouds below appeared like mighty waves. Bright day, warming and illumining the earth had arisen. Millions of odors arose from every tree, every blade of grass, and every flower. The singing of birds was heard, and Irma opened her arms as if to embrace infinity. She did not sink on her knees, but remained standing upright. Involuntarily, her foot left the ground, as if she could not help soaring away into infinite space. She pressed both hands to her forehead, and when she touched the bandage, it seemed loosened of itself and fell to the ground.

A sunbeam shone upon her brow and she felt that it was now pure. She stood there for a long while, gazing at the sunlight. Her eye was not dazzled by its refulgence. Calm and peaceful harmonies filled her soul. A child of man had witnessed the symbol of creation and had herself been created anew.

Now come, ye days that are still left me, be ye long or short!—Where and with whom I may have to spend them, it matters not; for I am free! I am saved!

All that I now do is only preparation for the journey. The hour draws near and, be it early or late, I am prepared for it. I have lived!

"Why, Irmgard, how strange you look!" exclaimed Gundel, coming out of the hut, and carrying the milkpail on her head. "Dear me, what a forehead you've got, so white and so beautiful! Oh, how beautiful you are! I never saw so smooth and beautiful a forehead before!"

Irma accepted a glass of milk from Gundel, and then tucked up her dress and went out into the woods. It was not until high noon

that she returned to the cottage. During the whole day, she had scarcely uttered a word.

In the cottage, she found the little pitchman standing before her table, and arranging a great heap of aromatic herbs and roots.

"Just look!" he cried, "I've found something already. Yes, I know a thing or two. I've been gathering clover and mountain parsley for the apothecary. I know everything growing hereabouts that they can use, and many a time has my sister said: 'In the spring, everything's sweet and good; and, wherever the poison lies, it takes the summer heat to bring it out.' Oh, she was a clever one! Many a time she's said: 'The best things grow up among the clouds.'"

After a short pause, he began again:

"Gundel's right; I must say, I did n't think you were so handsome. But, somehow, you do n't look healthy; you must eat more; why, you hardly eat anything."

A grateful smile was Irma's only reply.

"Do you know what I'd like to have been?"

"What?"

"Your father."

Irma answered him with a silent inclination of the head. Her father's spirit had been invoked, and it seemed as if he were speaking to her through the lips of this poor, simple-minded man, who continued:

"God forgive me, but I can't help feeling, once in a while, as if you had dropped down from heaven, and had neither father nor mother; and to-day you look so weak that my eyes fill with tears whenever I look at you. Now, do eat a bit!"

He went on chattering as confusedly as if he had been drinking too much, but the refrain was always the same: "Now do eat something!"

To please the good old man, Irma forced herself to do so.

CHAPTER IX.

THE days were bright and cheerful, the nights were glorious. The air was pure, the view was clear, and all troubled thoughts seemed to have lingered below in the crowded dwellings of men.

"I think you could now sing again," said the little pitchman to Irma; "your voice is n't so hoarse as it was. But you need more sleep. When one is old, sleep runs away of itself. Do n't drive it away, as long as it wants to stay with you."

The little pitchman now seemed doubly careful of her, and Irma perceived that her voice was hoarse. She would sit down and rest oftener than she had previously done. She would still roam through the woods and valleys, wherever huntsmen or woodcutter dared venture, but she would so often stop to rest herself that

her wanderings resembled the flight of some young bird which, at every short distance, is obliged to stop. She now remembered that this weariness had been upon her ever since her return from the capital. During the winter she had paid no attention to it; but now she thought she could understand Walpurga's motive in urging her to go up to the shepherd's hut. It was because she was ill, and in the hope that she might become well again. And yet she felt no pain. One day, while in the heart of the forest, she tried to sing a scale, but found that she could not. Her head sank upon her breast; and thus, after all—

On Sunday morning Franz came, bringing joy with him.

"Oh, how nice it is," said Gundel, as soon as she found herself alone with Franz. Irma was quite near, however, and heard every word of what she said. "Oh, how nice it is! I used to think my arms were only for work, but now I can do something else with them; I can throw them around somebody's neck and hug and kiss him!"

Gundel, who was usually dull and sullen, had become active and sprightly. She was bustling about all day, scrubbing, washing, milking the cows, making butter and cheese, and was always singing or humming a tune to herself. With her, singing filled the place of thinking. She was just like a bird that flutters about, singing all day long. Love had awakened her soul, and the self-dependent position in which she now found herself afforded a vent to her native cheerfulness of temperament.

Irma regarded all that environed her as if she were a mere looker-on, taking no part in the life about her.

Tradition tells us of good genii who descend to the earth, remain there long enough to look about them and put things to rights, and then return to heaven. They have no share in the world's cares and troubles. And thus it often seemed to Irma as if she were withdrawing herself from human sight, conversation and sympathy, into the one great idea in which she was wholly absorbed.

She went into the hut, and with her pencil wrote these few words in her journal:

"I desire my brother to give a marriage portion to Gundel and Franz, after my death, so that they may establish a household of their own."

Thereupon she wrapped the journal in the bandage which she had worn on her brow, and, placing her hand on it, vowed that she would not write another word in it. She had recorded enough of her self-questionings and of what her eyes had beheld, to reconcile her with the friend whom she had so deeply injured, as well as with herself. The days that still remained to her she desired to spend completely, and with herself.

Franz had brought word that Walpurga would not come that day, as her boy was unwell, but that she hoped to come without

fail on the following Sunday. Irma was almost pleased at the opportunity thus afforded her to become accustomed to her present life, before being obliged to converse with any one who knew her. She was now surrounded by people to whom her past was unknown. They indulged her wish to be alone and only addressed her when she asked them a question.

The second and third Sundays passed by, but Walpurga did not come, although she sent up some bread and salt. Irma scarcely cared to conjecture the cause of her absence.

How scornfully Irma had once repelled the thought of "a life in which nothing happens;" but now she realized it in herself, without the slightest feeling, on her part, that it might have been otherwise. She worked but little and would lie for hours on her favorite spot on the hillside.

Nature shed its kindly influence upon her. She greeted the dews of early morn, and the dews of evening moistened her locks. Like surrounding nature, she was calm and happy and without a wish. But in the night, when she looked up at the starry skies which, from the mountain height, were clearer and brighter, her soul soared into the infinite. She gazed on the mountains, unchanged since the day of their creation, peaks which no human foot had ever trod, which only the clouds could touch and on which the eagle's eye had rested. Familiar as she was with the life of plants and birds, she now scarcely regarded them. They seemed part of herself, just as her limbs were part of her body. Nature was no longer strange to her. She felt herself a part of it. She had reached that state of calm content in which life seems a pure chain of natural consequences, in which daily doubts and questionings have ceased. The sun rises and sets, the grass grows, the cows graze, and the law of life bids man work and reflect. The world around thee is subject to law and so is thine own life. To man alone is vouchsafed the knowledge of his duty, so that he may learn freely to obey the dictates of his own nature.

This thought illumined her soul with a light as clear as the blue sky above her. It caused her to forget that she had ever lived another life, or had ever erred.

On the fourth Sunday, Irma started out at an early hour and walked as far as the boundary-stone, where she waited for Walpurga and Hansei. Now that they had sent word that they would surely come, Irma longed to see Walpurga, the only being who knew her past and could confirm to her who she was.

She was sitting on the boundary-stone. She had taken off her hat and her brow was bare. She sat there, with her head resting on her hand, and wondering why, deep within the soul, there dwells a feeling that resents the surrender of our personality and the desire to know who and whence we are. To others, the galley slave is only known by the number he bears, but, as to himself, he knows

who he is and can never forget it. Why can we not freely lose ourselves in nature?

Her head drooped still lower. Presently, she heard voices and hurriedly arose.

"Is n't that our Irmgard?" asked Hansei.

"Yes, it is!"

Walpurga hurried up to her and held out her hand; but Hansei stood as if petrified. He had never before seen such a being. It always seemed to him as if there were something superhuman about her. Her whole face was radiant, her eyes larger, and the pure, noble forehead was as white and smooth as marble. Walpurga, who had known Irma when at the height of her beauty, now looked at her with a different feeling, for she was suffering for her sake, in a way that Irma could little dream of. Involuntarily, she pressed her hand against her trembling heart.

"Why do n't you shake hands with me, Hansei?" asked Irma.

"I—I—I never saw you look this way before."

A slight blush overspread her forehead. She passed her hand over it. Then she offered her hand to Hansei, who, in his excitement, pressed it so violently that he hurt her.

They walked on together towards the hut, and had gone but a few steps before they were joined by the little pitchman. He had, as was his wont, stealthily followed Irma. He was concerned for her sake, for he saw that something was the matter with her, and was, therefore, loth to leave her alone.

"She looks splendid, do n't she?" said he to Hansei, who had remained with him while Irma and Walpurga walked on in front. "But she lives on nothing but milk, just like a little child; and you can't make her remember that, up here, the nights get cold all of a sudden. She always wants to sit out of doors in the damp, night air. I often think she must be an angel and that, all of a sudden, she'll spread her wings and fly away—yes, you may laugh at it, but it ain't far from here up to heaven. 'We're the Lord's nearest neighbors, up here,' as my sister used to say."

Hansei and the uncle went off to look after the cattle. Besides the calf born on the first day, two others had come and all were doing well. It was a full hour before Hansei came to the hut and his whole bearing expressed his satisfaction with all that he had seen.

Meanwhile, Walpurga had examined everything in the hut and she, too, had found cleanliness and order everywhere.

In the afternoon, their next neighbor, who lived at a mountain meadow about an hour's distance from Hansei's, paid them a visit and brought her zither with her.

It was no small condescension, on the part of the freeholder's wife, to sing with Gundel and the neighbor. Franz joined in and the little pitchman was also able to take part. Hansei, however,

could not sing a note; but his want of ability added to his dignity—a wealthy farmer is supposed to have given up singing.

"This is the only place where you *can* sing, up here. You can't do it over there, where the road leads into the village," cried Gundel, after the first song. "If you sing, or speak a loud word there, the echo drowns it all."

She ran to the spot and sang a few notes, which were echoed again and again from every mountain and ravine.

"You ought to sing, too," said Walpurga to Irma; "you've no idea how well she can sing."

"I cannot sing," replied Irma; "my voice is gone."

"Then play something for us; you can play the zither beautifully," said Walpurga.

All joined in the request, and Irma was at last obliged to play. The little pitchman held his breath. He had never heard such beautiful playing before, and not one, thought he, knew what Irma could do. She soon modulated into the familiar melody, and the little pitchman was the first to start the song:

Oh, blissful is the tender tie.

It was a happy, cheerful hour.

Hansei now conducted his wife, Irma and the little pitchman to the spot from which they could catch a glimpse of the lake near their old home. It sparkled brightly in the sun, and Hansei remarked that it seemed like the look of a human being who had known him from youth up.

Walpurga was afraid lest the scene might awaken sad thoughts in Irma, and turned towards her; but she only said: "It pleases me, too."

Hansei now described the whole neighborhood to Irma, told her where this and that place lay, and showed her the mountain where he had planted so many trees. The forest itself could not be seen, but the rocky peak which rose from it was visible.

Walpurga, meanwhile, drew her uncle aside, and said:

"Uncle, my mother's dead—"

"Yes, I know it, and you can't think more of her than I do. Just ask Irmgard how often we talk of her. It always seems to me as if she must be in the next room. It is n't far to heaven from where we now are. She can hear every word we say."

"Yes, uncle; but let me finish what I was going to say. I've got something to tell you."

It went hard with the uncle to listen quietly, for he always had so much to say himself. Without noticing his repeated interruptions, Walpurga continued:

"Uncle, you're a sensible man—"

"May be, but it has n't done me much good in life."

"Now I want to tell you something—"

"Very well; out with it."

"I'm in trouble about Irmgard—"

"You need n't worry about her. I watch her as if she was the apple of my eye. Make yourself quite easy on that score."

"Yes, uncle, I know all about that; but there are some awful wicked people in the world, and they'll follow you up to the very mountain-tops—"

"Yes, I know; the gend'arme often—"

"Uncle, do listen to me patiently!"

"Yes, yes; I'm not saying a word."

"Well, uncle, mother knew who Irmgard is."

"And so do I. You need n't tell me anything about that. I know her, out and out. I'm not so stupid, depend on that."

"Yes, uncle, that's all right. I wanted to confide something to you—"

"You can trust me with anything. As to that matter, I can call your mother in heaven to bear me witness—"

"There's no need of that. Well, as I was going to say, Irmgard has had a sad life—"

"I know all about it. When I was in the city with her, I made up my mind that there must be something or other of that kind. It may be that they wanted her to marry somebody that she did n't like. May be she's a left-handed child, or may be she's got a husband and left him. She looked at the big houses in such a queer way—she always seemed as if she wanted to creep out of sight."

Walpurga was surprised at her uncle, who would not permit her to say a word, and suddenly it occurred to her: I was just like him once and thought that I must always keep chatting, instead of listening to what others had to tell me. She looked at her uncle for a long while and he, taking it as a compliment, now told her, for the first time, of what he had felt on that journey with Irma and of all that he had seen while with her—the lions, the serpents, the high priest and the "Magic Flute" were all mixed together in inextricable confusion.

Walpurga made up her mind that there was no need of divulging her secret, and contented herself by telling her uncle that he must never leave Irma alone, and that if any stranger came—no matter who he might be—he should take her secretly into the woods, so that no one should see her.

The uncle promised to do as he was bid.

"Yes," he added, "what a strange world it is. Just think of it! The herbs I take to the apothecary in the next village are for the baths of young Countess Wildenort, the daughter-in-law to the one I used to know. While I was standing in front of the apothecary's the other day, a man came riding by, on a beautiful, glossy black horse. Its legs looked as if they'd been turned in a lathe. The man had a child sitting in front of him on the horse, a boy about

the size of our Peter, with a blue frock, and wearing a feather in his hat, and the boy was so like Irmgard it might have been her own child. And the apothecary said to me that it was Count Wildenort, the son of the one I used to know. And so, when he rode past, I said: 'Good morning, Count?' He pulled up and asked: 'How do you know me?'

"And I said: 'I knew your father, and he was a good man—' And what do you think he said? Not a word. He rode off without so much as thanking me. They tell me he's not so good a man as his father was, and they say his mother-in-law has him under her thumb, so that he dare n't move. But the child is beautiful and the very picture of our Irma. It's wonderful, what strange things happen in the world."

Walpurga trembled, and made her uncle promise that he would never mention Irma to a soul in the village.

The uncle also promised that he would not let Irmgard know anything of the matter.

Towards evening, Walpurga and Hansei went home again and, when night came, Franz returned also. The inmates of the shepherd's hut were once more alone. Not a word was spoken among them, for they had talked and heard enough during the day. All was silent. Not a sound was heard but the tinkling cow bells in the woods and on the green hillside, and the stars shone overhead. Irma was seated on the spot from which the distant lake was visible, and it was long before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER X.

IRMMA now spent but a small portion of the day at the workbench. Her work had become even more irksome than at first. Her eye was constantly fixed on the vast and extended mountain prospect, towards which she would ever return from her task with added zest.

The little pitchman, who was quite diplomatic in his way, begged Irma to go with him while he went out to hunt plants and roots, for he said that he was old and did not know but what he might sometime lose his footing, and it would, in that case, be well to have some one with him who could go for help.

After that, Irma spent the greater part of the day with the little pitchman, wandering through the forest and over hill and dale. Her greatest delight was whenever they reached the spot where the brook arose. It flowed smoothly from a dark, rocky cavern and then boldly galloped down the hill, striking against fragments of rock by the way, now gliding over them, now forcing its way below them, until it reached the first valley, where it formed a basin encircled by tall, silver fir trees. Thence it flowed through the table land and, softly murmuring, glided down over the second mountain into the valley below.

The little pitchman plainly saw how much Irma liked to be here. He even thought that he had once heard her sing, and that her voice had been audible above the rushing and roaring of the waters, and it was a strange coincidence that most of the herbs of which he was in search could be found in the neighborhood. Now and then, he was fortunate enough to discover a bird's nest, and would show it to Irma, who was as delighted with it as though she were a little child. The animals here seemed as yet to be without fear of man and the little pitchman maintained that the reason the little birds did n't fly away when Irma looked at them, was because she had such kindly eyes. They flew about her as if she were an old friend, and the mother bird in the nest looked at her affectionately, and did not take wing.

Thus Irma would spend whole afternoons, sitting by the spring and, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, would, now and then, throw some flower which she had plucked into the brook.

The brook flowed through the town in which Gunther lived. A beautiful boy was sitting on its banks, and a red-haired servant in livery was by his side.

The boy ordered the servant to fish out a beautiful flower that was floating by. The servant clambered down the steep bank and, just as he reached the edge of the stream, the boy threw a stone into the water, so that it splashed, and the servant exclaimed: "My young master, you've behaved badly again!"

"Is he at his wild tricks again?" said a tall and handsome young man, with a countenance that bore the marks of dissipation. "What are you doing, Eberhard?"

The boy looked startled and the servant said:

"Nothing, sir. My young master and I were only having a little fun together."

The young man took the boy by the hand and walked with him through the meadow and towards a beautifully situated country-house, while Fitz, the groom, followed. The man in front was Count Eberhard von Wildenort, and the boy with him was his son.

Bruno had given strict orders that his boy should not go near the water. He had a great dread of that element, for it had brought such terrible misfortune upon his family. But, as if by some evil influence, the boy was always drawn towards the wild stream, and Fitz, who always let him have his own way, secretly abetted and accompanied him.

Bruno looked back, shook his finger at Fitz, and then entered the garden of the country-house. His wife was there, sitting in a large armchair. A little girl was playing on the gravel path, and a nurse was carrying an infant in her arms. The matin bell was heard and presently the mother-in-law appeared at the garden gate. She was followed by a servant who carried an embroidered cushion and a prayer-book sparkling with jewels.

The Baroness greeted her family with the calm and satisfied air of one who had already fulfilled her highest duties. Bruno offered her his arm and, Arabella following, they repaired to the breakfast table, which had been set in the arbor.

"Dear me!" said the Baroness. "What shall we do with ourselves to-day? It is lovely, and I don't think the weather will change. The apothecary tells me there is a very pretty shepherd's hut a few hours distant from here, the view from which must be exquisite. How would it be if we were to send our servants up before us, to make arrangements for our dining there?"

"Permit me, gracious mother-in-law," replied Bruno, timidly.

"Very well; make a suggestion! Don't leave everything to me. What have you to propose in this deadly-lively solitude, where we are thrown upon the odious privy councilor, and the female philistines of his family. I beg of you, do propose something."

"In my humble opinion—"

"Do n't be so long coming to the point!"

"I think it will be to your interest if I first go myself, to see whether the roads are fair and to prevent you from being disappointed; for, although theatrical shepherdesses are, as a rule, very charming, they are apt to be great frights *au naturel*."

"Thanks! you're really amiable. When will you set out on your reconnaissance?"

"To-day, if you desire it."

"He would like to get off and be a free, single man for one day," said the smiling Baroness to her daughter. "Oh, I know him! Shall we give him a day?" she asked roguishly.

"You're in a very good humor," replied Bruno. In spite of all her biting remarks, he was always studiously polite towards her. She had thrice paid his gaming and other debts, for Bruno had not yet received his sister's fortune, as the body had not been found. It was not till next year—that is, five years after her death—that he would be allowed to take legal possession of it.

"Yes, dear Bruno," at last said Arabella, who was deeply pained by her husband's position. "You'd better go by yourself. Leave Fitz here with us. Eberhard has grown so used to him, that he does n't care to play with any one else."

Bruno repaired to the apothecary's, where he was informed that the meadow belonged to the freeholder who lived at several hour's distance. He started for the farm at once.

Walpurga was sitting by the window, and playing with the child in her lap, when she saw a horseman approaching. She involuntarily raised her hand to her eyes and leaned back, as if he were going to ride straight over her.

She saw him dismount and saw Hansei greet him and lead the horse to the stable; after that, Hansei and the stranger came into the room.

"God greet you, Count!" said Walpurga, composing herself and advancing towards him. "How kind of you, to pay us a visit."

She extended her hand to Bruno, who went on twisting his moustache, and did not offer his hand in return.

"Ah! it's you, is it? I did n't know that you were the mistress here. And so this is the farm that you paid for with gold? You're shrewd, but do n't be alarmed. I shan't call you to account!"

Hansei observed that his wife was growing pale.

"Who is this man? Who is it that talks to you in this high and mighty manner?" he asked, drawing himself up.

"Be quiet!" said Walpurga. "He's one of the court gentlemen and is fond of joking."

"That's it, is it?" muttered Hansei. "I want to say a word to you, sir—what may your name be?"

"Count Wildenort."

"Well then, Count, I did n't ask who you were, and I bade you and your horse welcome. And now I'd like you to tell me what you want and leave my wife alone. In my house and home, I allow no jokes that do n't please me, and if the king himself were to come and try a joke that I did n't like, I'd put him out! No offense, but every one must say what he thinks. Now, sir, take a seat."

Hansei put on his hat and pressed it down firmly, as if to show that he was master here.

Bruno said, with a smile:

"You've a good husband, Walpurga."

"That'll do," said Hansei, interrupting him. "What do you wish, Count?"

"Nothing out of the way. They tell me you have a shepherd's hut on your mountain meadow, and I hear it is the finest in all the Highlands."

"Yes, yes," said Hansei, grinning. "It is n't so bad and it's very nicely situated; but I won't sell it."

"I do n't want to buy it. All I want is to spend the day up there."

"Why, how do you mean?"

"Are there good roads leading to it and is the place clean? Is there a chance of coming back, without bringing a herd along on one's body?"

"You're right, Walpurga, he's quite funny," whispered Hansei to his wife and then, turning to Bruno, he said:

"The roads are good and if you do n't mind going an hour's distance out of the way, you can ride almost to the very spot. I can show you the way up if you wish it."

"Certainly; my wife and my mother-in-law would like to see the place."

Walpurga was alarmed at the danger that threatened Irma, but, quickly collecting herself, she said, as if jesting:

"No, Count; women can't go up there. Such as we are can do

it, of course ; but, even then, we have to turn our petticoats into breeches." She laughed heartily, and Bruno laughed, too. He imagined his mother-in-law in this costume. She had tried many in her life, but never such an one.

The only object of his errand had been to enable him, under the pretext of having received authentic information, to dissuade his mother-in-law from her plan which, if carried out, would have subjected him to a day of bitter slavery. He well knew that nothing would be right, and that he would be obliged to swallow her reproaches and scoldings, just as if it were his fault that they chanced now upon a swamp, now upon a hill, and that while, at the shepherd's hut, they might feed their eyes on mountains of ice, they could not have vanilla ices with which to satisfy the palate. He knew all about these pleasure parties, at which he generally felt as if he must die of vexation. Walpurga found an opportunity to tell her husband to use all the means in his power to dissuade the Count from visiting their mountain meadow. And so when Hansei went out into the stable with the Count, who was looking for his horse, he laughed till he showed every tooth in his head, while he said :

"There's a relation of ours up there, and she's a little bit out of her mind."

Walpurga also came out into the stable, for she feared that her husband might betray something. Bruno asked her whether she knew what had become of her friend.

Walpurga shook her head and wept.

"Yes," said she, "I can well say no one on this earth suffered more for her sake than I did."

She wept so bitterly that Bruno offered to console her.

At last he left.

It was several days before Walpurga recovered from the effects of her fright. Again and again, it seemed to her that it might be better if Irma were found out, for perhaps she was quite ill and might die before her time. But if she were discovered, it would kill her at once. This accounted for her uneasiness, while at the hut on the previous Sunday, and for her having enjoined the greatest caution on the uncle. She was constantly pursued by the thought that there would soon be an end to it all. If one only knew how and what the end would be, and whether anything could be done. She could do nothing. All she could do was to let what would happen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE trees in Gunther's garden were decked with green, and the parterre was filled with lovely flowers. The birds were singing and the forest stream that flowed through the grounds murmured as if regretful at being obliged to leave the spot so soon.

Within doors, all was joy and happiness. Bronnen and Paula were betrothed. The love that had calmly grown and ripened, now suddenly burst forth in all its glory. Bronnen wished to call Paula his own, before the arrival of the court, so that she might then feel less constrained and have an opportunity to accustom herself to the manners of the court circle. It was not without fear that Madame Gunther thought of her child entering the stirring life of the capital, a life of which she had an unconquerable dread. Bronnen told the Doctor and his wife that he had found it easier to bring about reform in politics than in court etiquette. It had hitherto been a time-honored and unalterable custom that wives of the citizen class could not be presented at court, no matter what their husbands' rank might be. He had not been able to effect a change in this until he had made it a cabinet question. Gunther smiled at this explanation. He knew how stubbornly etiquette resisted all attempts at innovation. Madame Gunther, on the other hand, was quite alarmed at the idea that, both at court and at the capital, Paula would be the first lady after the queen. She would have been far better pleased if Bronnen's position had been an humbler one; but she loved him with a maternal affection that expressed itself in her every glance. She even went so far that Gunther smilingly remarked: "You've become disloyal to your own country—," for she had asserted that a man so noble, so dignified, and yet both firm and yielding in character, could only be developed under a monarchical government. "In a republic," said she, "there is a certain want of form and indulgence of personal inclination. The self-respect which never fails in the respect due to others was the peculiar fruit of courts, and Bronnen had one talent which was especially calculated to place every one at ease while with him. He was a good listener and was always willing to wait attentively until you had finished what you wanted to say."

The joy of the parents was, however, but a mild reflection of that of the betrothed. After Paula had, in all sincerity, confessed her fear that she might fail to satisfy a man like Bronnen, she soon became calm again, for she felt that there is a depth of love which, including all that is highest on earth, embraces enduring happiness. The lovers roamed through field and forest, and Bronnen was again and again reminded of the pure and radiant sentiments which the refined and elevated atmosphere of her home had firmly established in Paula. With every new chord that he touched, he struck a rich store of thought and found her gifted with an impressible and receptive mind. He rejoiced in the destiny which had thus directed his choice, and in the conviction that all individual improvement is achieved and perfected by mutual effort.

Madame Gunther was with her husband in his study, and would, now and then, look out of the window at the lovers, who were walking in the garden.

"Bronnen made a strange confession to Paula and me yesterday," said she. "If another had told me of it, I could not have believed it."

"What was it?"

"He told us, with a voice full of emotion, that he had once loved Countess Wildenort. Did you know of it?"

"No, but I can't find anything wrong in it. If she only could have controlled her impulses, she would have been worthy of the best of men, and my dear Eberhard deserved to have such a man for his son."

"Tell me," asked Madame Gunther, "I've never found the slightest thing to object to in him, but do you think it right of him to tell Paula of this? It will make her still more anxious; she will compare herself with the brilliant Countess, and—"

"Do n't let that trouble you," said Gunther, interrupting her; "a heart which, like our child's, is conscious of the full power of love, possesses an inexhaustible fund of happiness which no rival, be she ever so great and brilliant, can disturb. If it were possible, I would think even more of him than I now do, for having told her of this. It is not every man who is so fortunate as I have been and whose first love is his only love. Most of us are obliged to pass through disappointment and loss, and he who, like Bronnen, has come out of the ordeal, pure and unscathed, may praise his lot. The more I regard the world, from a distance as it were, the greatest misfortune which has befallen mankind is, that a life soiled by vice should go on parallel with that which is termed regular and domestic, creating discord among men, as well as in the individual mind. If the race is to be saved, a great revolution must take place in the minds of men. We have watched over our child so long and so faithfully that, in spite of all worldly happiness, it would deeply grieve me to see her bestow her hand on a man who, according to the counterfeit expression coined by society, has led a fast life."

Madame Gunther regarded her husband with a look of unspeakable joy. "I find that Bronnen has converted you from your aversion to the military profession," she said, in a soft voice.

"By no means," replied Gunther, "but Bronnen has not been injured by it. With resolute courage and an easy sway over others, he combines a deep and earnest mind. It is almost miraculous that, just when I desire to produce in my work the image of a pure and active man of the present day, the very traits I seek are found in the man who, in the free course of nature, is to belong to me. It seems as if mysterious agencies provided us with that which the poetic eye endeavors to portray to itself. Bronnen seems as if stepping forth from my work."

Gunther had never before spoken thus of his work. "Do n't misunderstand me," he added; "I do not look upon any one as representing the ideal of perfect manhood, but I can find some

traits in every one, and many of them in Bronnen. Humanity, as I find it in the actual world, is filled with beauty; but, in truth, it is still more beautiful, and I am glad to think that the next generation will be better than our own. And yet we may truly say that the good we have achieved, lives on with them. Their enthusiasm will be less than ours, but their moderation will render it more enduring. But I do not care to go too far into this subject, at present. All I wanted to say was, that the feeling of discord, in modern times, arises from the fact that religion has exalted faith above morals, that art has pursued a similar course with beauty, and politics with freedom. And yet they are one and inseparable, and must ever remain so. I trust that I may yet be able to make this clear to the world, and thus contribute somewhat to the union of true piety, beauty and freedom, with the morality which is, at present, so graciously tolerated."

Their conversation was interrupted, for Count von Wildenort, his wife and mother-in-law were announced. The servant was instructed to ask them to the garden saloon, and, shortly afterwards, the visitors, Gunther and his wife, Bronnen and his betrothed, were engaged in lively conversation. Madame Gunther confined her attentions to the young Countess, who had greatly improved under Gunther's treatment, while Baroness Steigeneck engaged the lovers in conversation. Madame Gunther would often look at Bronnen and Paula as if she would fain brush away a caterpillar crawling over them. Bruno addressed Gunther quite cheerfully, and told him that during the royal visit he would probably return by command of their majesties. This may have been intended as a hint to Gunther to bring about such an order, for the Baroness, greatly annoyed by her exclusion from court, intended to return to her castle, with her children and grandchildren, and then to visit some fashionable watering-place. She was eager to reach the gaming-table.

They were quite long in taking their leave, and expressed their gratitude for the pleasures they had enjoyed during their stay, as well as their envy of those who could live here, as on some happy island. At last they stepped into their carriage and drove off.

After the visitors had left, Madame Gunther opened all the windows, in order that a current of fresh air might carry away the strong perfumes of the Baroness.

Bronnen left the same evening. The family accompanied him for a short distance. He and Paula walked in front, Gunther and his wife behind. The empty carriage followed after them, and Bronnen did not enter it until he had taken leave of his friends. The parting was simple and affectionate. They were full of the joyful memories of the day just past, and looked forward to future happy days, for Bronnen intended to return with the king.

On the way home, Paula walked between her parents, her cheeks glowing with excitement. Gunther, however, left his wife and daughter before reaching home, for he was obliged to repair to Count Wildenort's lodgings, in order to give further directions to his wife.

Mother and daughter went on alone, and when Madame Gunther looked at her daughter, she saw that a silent tear was in her eye, although her face was radiant with joy.

"You have a right to feel happy," said Madame Gunther, "you will have a husband fit to be compared to your father. I can wish you nothing better than to enjoy such happiness as has been mine, and that the joy I have had in my children, and in you especially, may some day be yours."

"Ah mother!" said Paula, "I can't realize how I could let him go away alone, nor, on the other hand, that I am to leave you and father and sister. But Bronnen"—she always mentioned him by his surname—"says that he hopes father will again return to the capital; that he might select any post he pleases, for the king wishes it."

"I do n't think your father will consent. But let nothing of that kind distress you, my dear child. You may well be happy, for your happiness is shared by us."

Before reaching home, they saw several beautiful horses and carriages sent in advance of the queen, whose arrival was expected within the next few days. The highway had suddenly become full of life and the little town was filled with wondering and delighted crowds. The court was coming, and to Gunther they were indebted for all this. The wife and daughter were respectfully greeted by all whom they met, and, even in the distance, one could see the townsfolk pointing them out to the recently arrived court servants, who also greeted them quite obsequiously.

Further on, they met a vehicle which seemed as if it belonged to fairyland. Two tiny bay ponies, with short-clipped black manes and gay trappings, were harnessed to a little, low-wheeled carriage. As if divining what was going on, the children appeared at the farmhouses and rushed across the meadows and fields, to admire the crown prince's fairy-like equipage, and followed it through the town, where the crowd of joyous, shouting children grew larger and larger, until they at last reached the dairy-farm. Paula looked on with a smile. She stopped with her mother before a house, the sign-board on which announced that it was the new telegraph office. Here, thought she to herself, the messages she would send, and those she would receive after leaving her paternal home, would pass.

The telegraph poles which Irma had seen the workmen putting up near the farm, had been erected on account of the queen's intended summer sojourn in the neighborhood.

Early on the following morning, the first telegram reached the little town. It was addressed to Paula and was as follows :

"I dedicate the electric spark to the service of love. I am well, and send greetings to you, your father, mother and sister.

"BRONNEN."

CHAPTER XII.

THE school children were ranged under the fruit trees on either side of the road. Bells were ringing, music resounding, cannon firing, and the rugged mountains echoed back the merry din.

It was the queen's entry.

She sat in an open carriage drawn by four white horses. The prince, a boy with golden hair and fresh complexion, sat by her side. The carriage stopped at the boundary line. A maiden dressed in the becoming costume of the country, welcomed the queen in a poem of the schoolmaster's composition, and presented her with a bouquet of alpine flowers. The queen graciously accepted the bouquet. She bowed in all directions and held out her hand to the child. The prince followed her example, saying in a voice loud enough to be heard by the town council and all the catholic and evangelical ministers present : "God greet you !"

Cheers resounded again and again, and their path was strewn with flowers.

The queen drove through the little town, which was decorated with flags and garlands. On her arrival, she found that the court cavaliers who had preceded her were in waiting, and that Gunther was among them. For the first time since his return, he wore the marks of the various grand orders to which he belonged. After passing under a triumphal arch, the carriage stopped and the queen alighted.

She held out her hand to Gunther, who would gladly have kissed it ; but he turned to the prince and kissed him. He was so agitated that he could not speak a word. At last he said :

"I bid Your Majesty welcome to my home !"

"Wherever you are, there is home," replied the queen.

She passed, leading her boy by the hand.

Countess Brinkenstein, Lady Constance, and other court ladies, also exchanged greetings with Gunther. There were others, however, who were more recently appointed and whom Gunther did not know.

The queen and her immediate suite soon reached the great terrace, which commanded a delightful view of mountain and valley. Gunther pointed out the direction of the mountain range and the intervening valleys. He also told her the names of the principal peaks and would, here and there, add a few items of historical interest. He was presenting the chiefs of his native home to the

queen. Evening soon set in and the lofty heights were bathed in the warm hues of the glorious sunset. They were silent for a few moments, while they gazed up at the heights, and little did they think of her who had been dreamily looking thence out into the wide world, and who had just been startled by the echo of the guns from the neighboring cliffs. There must be some joyous feast going on down there, she thought, and she who had once moved among this circle, and had not been the least admired in it, lived within herself, in silence and solitude.

It seemed as if the whole population of the town and the outlying neighborhood had gathered at the park railing, in order to catch a glimpse of the queen. All that pertained to her, be it her horses, her carriages, or her servants, inspired them with wonder and admiration.

At the sound of the evening bell, the men took off their hats and, after a silent prayer, all proceeded homeward.

It was soon night. The party had dispersed and the queen asked Gunther if there was not some way to get to his house without going through the town. Gunther replied that the king had had a path made around the hill.

The queen looked down. The king's thoughtful care pleased her. Had he been present at that moment, she would have spoken to him more kindly than she had for many a day.

"I should like to visit your family," said the queen.

"I shall have the honor of bringing them to Your Majesty tomorrow."

"The evening is so charming; let us go to them now."

The queen, attended by Gunther and numerous ladies and gentlemen of the court, took the new path that led to the Doctor's dwelling.

"Had you not better send word to your ladies that the queen is about to visit them?" said Countess Brinkenstein to Gunther. Although the laws of etiquette were sometimes relaxed during her visit to the country, the informal manner in which the queen set about paying this visit seemed opposed to all rules.

Gunther graciously declined following out her suggestion.

He was proudly conscious of the fact that, at whatever time the queen and her suite might enter his house, they would find his wife, his house and his children prepared to receive them.

Clever Stasi, the inspector's wife, had, however, heard where they were going, and hurried to tell Madame Gunther who was coming.

When the visitors arrived, the garden saloon was brilliantly lighted and, at the garden gate, they were met by Madame Gunther, who was attended by both of her daughters. Their reception of the queen was respectful and reverential, although it may not have been strictly in accordance with that prescribed by court forms.

"I could not wait," said the queen.—Her voice seemed clearer and brighter than before.—"I felt that I must see you to-day and offer you my congratulations. You, I presume, are the affianced of Minister Bronnen?" said she, addressing Paula.

Paula bowed so correctly that Countess Brinkenstein could not repress a nod of approval. The queen extended her hand to Paula and kissed her on the forehead.

"I shall now see you often," she added, "and it will be pleasant to remember that I've known you in your home."

She beckoned Madame Gunther to draw near, and, accompanied by her, walked about the garden.

"And so I see you to-day, for the first time," said the queen. "I trust that you do not look upon me as a stranger?"

"Your Majesty, it is the first time in my life that I address a queen, and I entreat you—"

"Your husband has been as a father to me, and I wish that you, too— But let us leave it to the future to determine our impressions of each other. Permit me, however, to request you to cast aside a little of your Swiss prejudice against royalty."

"Your Majesty, I am a citizen of your country."

"I am delighted that our first meeting is in your own house. Do you still sing much? I've been told that you used to sing beautifully."

"Your Majesty, I've left that to the younger voices of my children. Paula sings."

"How charming! I have long regretted that none of the ladies of our more immediate circle sing well."

Like a passing shadow, the thought of Irma flashed through the queen's mind. She was standing by the stream that flowed down from the mountain meadow, and which here noisily rushed by.

The queen remained in the pavilion but a short time. When she was about to leave, she said to Madame Gunther:

"Will you not accompany me part of the way?"

"No, I thank Your Majesty."

"Then I shall see you to-morrow. Good night. Let us be good neighbors."

The queen left.

Gunther well knew how the ladies of the court would discuss his wife's great breach of decorum in declining to comply with the queen's expressed wish. But he did not say a word to his wife about it, for he knew that he could permit her to have her own way. He felt sure that she would always do what was right, and that, if she did disregard certain conventionalities, she would nevertheless manage everything for the best. Indeed, the very fact of her having gently repelled the queen's exceedingly gracious advances, was doubly reassuring to him.

"I am glad," said Madame Gunther to her husband, when they

were together in the drawing-room, "that Paula becomes introduced to court life while yet in her father's house. The queen really impresses me as a noble creature."

Gunther assented, and added that Paula had already proven how well she had profited by Bronnen's advice. For Bronnen had told her that, in order to be free at court, one must make its trifling forms a sort of second nature, so that they can be practiced without special stress or difficulty; and that, in fact, they must be mastered just as one masters the grammar of his native tongue.

In the silent moonlight night, Paula was heard singing, with full voice and passionate expression, the concluding verses of the song of Goethe's, the song that Bronnen admired above all others:

Crown of existence,
Joy without rest,
Love art thou.

On yonder heights, whither no voice from below reached, there sat a solitary one, and through her mind there passed a song of the same master's—the song of songs, in which the soul is freed from all its burdens, and is again united with enduring nature:

O'er hill and dale,
Thy splendor falls;
No longer care.
My heart enthralls.

The court ladies at the dairy-farm kept up their talk until a late hour. Those who had not been permitted to accompany the queen envied the others, who had enjoyed an early opportunity of meeting Bronnen's affianced. What could there have been in the citizen's daughter to tempt Bronnen, who might have had the hand of the highest in the land? Some pronounced her awkward, others too confident, and doubts were expressed as to her beauty. The younger ladies were jokingly informed that, for many days to come, Doctor Gunther would have a parade of sentiment and universal ideas, and this, too, *au grand sérieux*.

The moon shone brightly on the mountains and the valleys. Everything was hushed in slumber. The only sounds heard were the gurgling of the springs, the murmuring of the stream and, now and then, a mountain cry from the heights above.

A bright day dawned.

Gunther visited the queen at an early hour. For the next few weeks, he had determined to sacrifice his quiet mornings. He was quite willing to devote himself entirely to his friend, and looked forward to a resumption of his wonted employments, after her departure.

He was again sitting on the terrace, as he had been one morning five years ago; but this time, instead of looking at the distant

mountains, he was surrounded by them, and, as she had then done, the queen now again appeared in a white morning robe and greeted him. But her whole being had changed; her step was freer, her words more decided.

"We shall make no programme of what we intend to do here," said she, as she walked up and down the garden with Gunther; "we'll take life as it comes."

She told him how pleased she was to have made the acquaintance of his wife and daughters, and that she thought he had done wisely, while at the capital, in keeping his home life and his life at court, as far as possible, distinct from each other. Memories of Irma again seemed to cast a passing shadow over the bright morning, for the queen well knew that Gunther had introduced her to his family. It seemed as if the memory of Irma were not yet fully banished and buried.

"I trust Your Majesty will, nevertheless, permit me to draw up a little programme," said Gunther. "It has but one paragraph. Permit me to explain it. I've never been able to express myself in writing on this matter. I can only do so in person. I have to accuse myself of having done you a great wrong."

"You? A great wrong?"

"Yes, and it relieves me to confess it to you. Your Majesty, I do not enquire as to your present relations with your royal consort. The fact that he has prepared all this for you, and the manner in which it has been done, proves his delicate feeling."

"And I admit it willingly, but still I cannot—"

"I am obliged to interrupt you, Your Majesty, for that which I request of you is that we shall never more speak of your relations to his majesty. Long ago, when you were torn by an inner struggle, I believed that if I could only induce you to encourage freer and more liberal views, a clearer mental vision would better enable you to be just towards others, and would be followed by returning love. And it was just there that I was wrong, for I offended against a simple but fundamental principle: feelings cannot be governed by thought. And were it otherwise, the interference of a third party should always be rejected. The attempted mediator only widens the breach. Husband and wife can alone repair it. And now, Your Majesty, let us speak no more of this matter, for thus only can we, without feeling embarrassed, meet each other, or the king himself. Your own heart is your only confidant. Follow its dictates and do not be frightened back by any apparent alienation or change of feeling! Will you grant me the favor I ask?"

"Yes. And now not another word on the subject."

They conversed freely and cheerfully, as if they had both laid aside a burden which had heavily rested upon them.

The crown prince was brought in. Gunther was delighted with his healthy appearance and promised him a playmate who was born on the same day as himself.

"Mamma, why haven't I a little sister?" asked the crown prince.

The color rose to the queen's cheeks.

"Little Cornelia is to be your sister," she replied, and gave orders that they should take the prince to visit the child at the Doctor's house.

Gunther's parting instructions to Madame von Gerloff were that the children should be shown the bird's nest in the rosebush. The prince asked permission to take Schnipp and Schnapp with him, and the two children were soon driving through the valley, in the pretty little carriage, a little groom managing the horses and a little outrider in front. At noon, Madame Gunther and her daughters visited the queen. Little by little, a common interest in their pleasures, aided by the invigorating influences of nature, helped to bring about a uniform tone of feeling, and thus to level distinctions which would be more closely observed in city circles.

The days sped by pleasantly. The queen felt no craving for unwonted pleasures; and every hour was complete in itself.

The queen, one day, told Madame Gunther that she was the first citizen's wife with whom she had been on terms of familiar intimacy, and that she could not help admiring her clear, good sense.

"I must tell you something of my youth," replied Madame Gunther, to whom this condescending praise was quite a surprise.

"Pray do so," said the queen, encouragingly.

"Your Majesty, I was betrothed and happy. Wilhelm was traveling during his vacation and we often wrote to each other. One day, I received a letter from him which offended my pride and, indeed, deeply wounded me. I had indulged in excessive sensibility and, in reply, he quoted the words of Lessing which Nathan addresses to the Knight Templar: 'Mediocrity, like ours, can be found in abundance everywhere!'"

"And did that offend you?"

"Yes, Your Majesty; it offended me deeply. Gunther is without a trace of that false modesty which is all the more vain, the more modest it appears. He stood so high in my esteem that I felt he had, by using this expression, committed an offense against himself and, I may confess it, against myself, as well. I did not regard myself as mediocre, but as a highly gifted being. But from that time, I began to perceive that most suffering arises from the fact that those who have understanding, culture, and some talent, regard themselves as belonging to a higher order of beings, privileged to disregard ordinary barriers and to step beyond their allotted sphere of duty. To acknowledge myself as mediocre, and to shape my own actions, and my judgment of others, accordingly, has ever been my rule in life; and I must beg Your Majesty to regard me in the same way. There are thousands of women like

me. It is just as it is in singing. I've sung in a chorus, and know there are many good voices who never aspire to solos."

The queen was silent. The words which Madame Gunther had uttered in perfect sincerity, might be applied in so many different ways—to herself, to the king, and to her who was still unforgotten.

At last she looked up frankly.

"I have a request to make of you," she said, with faltering voice, while she took out a breastpin with a large pearl. "Oblige me by accepting this memento of this hour and of the truth which you have just imparted to me."

"Your Majesty," replied Madame Gunther, "I have never in all my life, accepted a present of this kind. But I can easily understand that you, as a queen, are accustomed to experience the joy of bestowing gifts on others and of thus making them happy. I accept it as a symbol, as if it were an unfading flower from your garden."

Madame Gunther wended her way homeward, in a calm and contented mood. When she arrived before the house, she suddenly stopped. The windows of the large drawing-room were open. Some one was playing the piano with powerful, masterly touch and expression. It could not be Paula. Who could it be?

Madame Gunther's nephew, the young man whose song Irma had sung years before, and who, on a previous visit to his relatives, had sought the freeholder's dwelling as a refuge from the storm, and had there met Irma without knowing who she was, had now, as had been foretold him, become totally blind. He had become a master of the piano, and bore his sad fate with manly fortitude. The meeting between Madame Gunther and her nephew was deeply affecting.

That evening, she introduced him to the queen, who, as her first act of friendship to the Doctor's wife, appointed him "pianist to the queen." All that remained was to submit the appointment to the approval of the king, who was expected to arrive in a few days.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE king had arrived during the night. In order to avoid the pomp of a reception, he came unannounced. He regarded himself as the guest of the queen, for whom alone he had ordered the preparation of this modest summer retreat.

On the following morning, Gunther, decorated with his orders, repaired to the farm.

He felt that the tone of their little circle must suffer a change by the advent of any new comer, even if possessed of a more yielding disposition than that of the king.

Gunther had not seen the king since he waited upon him to

thank him for the order he had conferred upon him. He was composed. One point in favor of court forms is that they are fixed and unalterable, as well as independent of passing moods.

Gunther's path led along the slope of a projecting hill and, on the way, his thoughts involuntarily recurred to Eberhard. The early hour, the mountain air, and the close-fitting uniform—all were just as they had been years ago.

Eberhard had always maintained that unmeaning politeness is only disguised rudeness. He required that every word and act should come from the depths of one's soul, and that, at every moment, life should be truthful. During the years he had spent in solitude, Gunther came to perceive that the concessions he had made to his surroundings, had, to a certain extent, involved failure to comply with this precept. He now found his greatest happiness in being perfectly truthful towards himself and the world, and for this reason, in the work in which he expected to sum up the results of his life, he had expressed his feelings without reserve or disguise.

When his eye fell on the farmhouse, he paused to collect his thoughts. He was about to pay his respects to the man who had endeavored to degrade him.

The king stood at the open window and, when he saw Gunther approach, was greatly agitated. If the dignity that befits kings had not forbidden it, he would gladly have called out a welcome to the man whom he esteemed so highly; and if kingly dignity requires this much, it also possesses one great advantage—for while he who desires admittance still waits, he who grants it maintains his natural freedom, or, in other words, is at home while the other is as a stranger.

Gunther sent in his name, and was at once admitted. The king advanced to meet him, and said:

"Welcome, my dear privy councilor! I am heartily glad—" He faltered at the words and, as if changing his mind, added: "I am delighted to have an opportunity to wish you joy! One scarcely knows whether to say that you deserve such a son as Minister Bronnen, or that he deserves such a father as you. It's all the same, I suppose," he concluded with a smile which seemed somewhat forced.

"I humbly thank Your Majesty—" Gunther also hesitated, for it was a long while since he had used this phrase—"for the interest you have graciously manifested in me and mine."

The king and Gunther met under changed and mutually embarrassing circumstances, and congratulations on Bronnen's engagement seemed to afford a convenient subject of conversation. It was, nevertheless, followed by a pause, in which the two men who had been separated for two years, eyed each other as if each would again impress his memory with the features which, for many

years, he had seen almost daily. Gunther had changed but little. His beard was short, thick and of a snowy white. The king's figure was fuller than it had been. His face wore a deep and earnest expression which harmonized with his winning and amiable deportment. His movements seemed to have gained, rather than lost, in elasticity and vigor.

"I hear," said the king, resuming the conversation, "that you are engaged on a great philosophical work, and I feel that we have reason to congratulate ourselves thereat, for that will afford us an opportunity to enjoy those fruits of your thought which, in our daily intercourse, we are now deprived of."

"Your Majesty, I am reviewing my life and striking a balance. In some respects, there is more, in others, less than I had reason to hope for. I live within myself, and am happy to think that, when I look out into the world, I can perceive that those who are called for great purposes can show a clear balance sheet."

"Growth is slow," said the king. "While driving through the fields yesterday, I thought to myself: how long it takes before the blade of corn becomes the ripened ear. We cannot see how much it grows with each day. We can only note the result."

Smiling, and perfectly unconstrained, he added: "I am imparting my latest observations to you. It seems—it seems—as though it were but yesterday, since we last met. Let us go into the garden."

On the way, the king asked: "How do you find the prince?"

"He has a well-built frame and, as far as I can judge, his mental development is normal and healthy."

In consequence of the long years of separation and the lingering feeling of reserve, there were frequent breaks in the conversation.

"You have again been living among the people," said the king, "and has your experience satisfied you that the popular mind (or, in other words, popular simplicity in thought and manners) is the divinely appointed corrective of the errors of a higher civilization?"

Gunther looked up as if amazed. Was the question an idle one, or did a deeper significance underlie it? Had the king not succeeded in conquering his dislike of popular verdicts? Or did he—as a proof of returning royal favor—merely intend to afford the man whom he had so deeply injured, an opportunity to gratify his vanity by ventilating his opinions?

Quick as lightning, these thoughts flashed through his mind. After a short pause, he replied:

"With Your Majesty's permission, let me, before proceeding to answer you, state the question more distinctly."

"Pray do so."

A pause ensued, just as if they were trying and tuning inner

instruments which, coming from unequal temperatures, had not yet been brought into harmony with each other; for although both men were calm and self-controlled, their moods were not in accord.

"If by the term 'popular mind,' you mean those views and states of feeling which are not based upon scientific laws or art traditions, but which seem as fixed and unchangeable as the forces of nature; and if, on the other hand, you apply the term 'corrective' to that which separates us from all that is alien or effete, and leads us, as it were, back to nature—I am prepared to answer your question as well as I know how."

"I am entirely satisfied with the form in which you put the question," replied the king. "I often think that discussions are barren of results, simply because the question was vaguely or imperfectly stated at the start."

Gunther nodded a smiling approval of these words.

"And now for the answer," asked the king, all attention.

"Although I may seem to wander from the point, I shall soon return to it. The event from which it dates, forms a turning point in the history of mankind. Unlike all that went before, the central figure which later generations have idealized, and from which they have drawn inspiration, was not born on Olympic heights. Jesus was born in a manger, and yet kings performed pious pilgrimages to the spot. The fact that the Spirit which is innate with the pure man, could even be born in a manger, among the dumb animals devoted to domestic use, is an enduring proof of pure democracy, or of nobility in that which is lowly. If, however, the manger were, henceforth, to be regarded as alone holy, or the forms and surroundings of popular life be accepted as the only abode of the eternal spirit, or the embodiment of holy nature itself, it would be a perversion of truth, a new orthodoxy, another schism. This much always remains; the spirit of truth appears everywhere—in the manger and in the pillared temple, in the library of the student and on the royal throne in the glittering palace. Buddha, who was one of the greatest benefactors and regenerators of mankind, and who, in the realm of caste, maintained the equality of human rights, was the son of a king.

"And now to return to the question. Whenever a form of civilization has attained its highest development and begins to show its defects, the idea of complete revolution suggests itself. None but violent methods are thought of, and, while the only object to be gained is the bringing about of regeneration, by means of strata which have not yet been exhausted, and which bring new strength to bear, it is deemed necessary to go back to the beginning of all things. But the lower strata cannot, of themselves, effect this regeneration. What is required of them is to be constantly sending fresh strength to those above them. The great masses, considered as such, cannot renew civilization. All that they can do is to fur-

nish new material. It is only in a limited sense that the masses are the bearers of the spirit of the people. Individual men, who have ever preserved their childlike simplicity of soul, just as they received it from nature, and through subsequent development have retained it unimpaired, will now and then rise from among the masses. But the scientific spirit must be united with this childlike feeling, and then an epoch, or an individual, forms a node by which this development is not interrupted but from which it seems to take a new start, forming, as it were, a new growth on the old stem. It is not the people, as a mass, but a certain man or circle that concentrates the spirit of the people within itself, and renews the same individually."

"Is not that aristocracy?" asked the king, in a soft, almost hesitating voice.

"Your Majesty, I dread no term or idea that seems to be the result of logical consistency. Call it an aristocracy, if you will, but it is a democratic one, ever renewing itself. For those who, from generation to generation, represent the spirit of the people, are not taken from the same sphere."

"I understand," said the king, stopping in front of a rose-bush. "It is just as here, where every year brings forth new shoots that bear the roses. But pardon me, I interrupted you!"

"I have only to add," said Gunther, "that while the masses, considered as such, are the bearers of civilization, the highest development of this civilization is brought about by the few who are called and chosen for the task. To make my meaning clearer: He who is of average size, is not tall, and he who possesses general culture has naught that distinguishes or elevates him above the rest."

"But who measures and passes upon such claims to such distinction?" asked the king.

"In science and art, it is the sense of being called to do certain things, the individual impulse and energy that give shape to ideas which others have only imperfectly conceived, and which, when they have once found utterance, the masses gladly accept as their own. In state affairs, this call is conveyed by means of elections, which have never before obtained to the same extent as at present. It is of great advantage that the occasional call to vote is opposed, or rather, held in check, by the call which is founded on historic claims. But, whenever the latter fails to be at one with the former, it mistakes its strength, and at last falls."

The king walked on in silence, his eyes bent on the ground. Everything tended to prove that there is a united mind, or totality of thought, which is and must be more powerful than any individual mind. There was no longer the faintest suspicion that this conclusion was the result of an idle question.

Although the king walked on in silence, the break in the con-

versation was not caused by an unresolved dissonance, jarring his soul's depths.

He was lost in thought, for he had learned how to make a new truth his own by reflection, instead of dismissing it with light and trifling conversation.

"May I ask," said the king, in a voice that betokened great diffidence—"may I ask whether the views which you have just imparted to me, and which have furnished me with much food for future thought, are to be more fully expounded in the work on which you are now employed?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty."

"Then allow me, at once, to pass to a question that concerns our little life and that portion of history which we are to help make."

The king folded his arms and continued:

"Let me be frank with you. You have refused the position of Minister of Education offered you by Minister Bronnen. I can well imagine that you do not care to sacrifice science to the labors of a bureau. Would you perhaps prefer—excuse me," said the king, with an unconstrained smile, "excuse me for using your favorite expression, I did it quite unawares—might I offer you the position of President of the Academy?"

"I humbly request Your Majesty not to consider me as ungrateful, but I have determined never again to enter the busy world. Besides that—Your Majesty knows that I have no false modesty—I frankly acknowledge that my long continued attention to work of a practical nature has, to so great an extent, prevented me from keeping up my scientific studies, that I could not do justice to the position so graciously offered me. I beg Your Majesty to permit me to spend the rest of my life in retirement. I have become an author and desire to remain one."

"I should willingly accord you perfect liberty to express your sentiments regardless of consequences."

"I know that very well, Your Majesty, and at once avail myself of it by telling you that liberty which is accorded us is not perfect liberty. In any elevated position under the state, I would be obliged to respect Your Majesty's wishes and also to have regard to my son's position. I entreat you, therefore, to permit me to be an author and remain one; nothing more."

The king's features betrayed his displeasure. He had done his utmost, had shown by deeds how glad he would be to repair the effects of his former hasty conduct, and here again he was met by the obstinacy he had so often encountered. Did the man expect to hear the king say: "I repent; pardon me!"?

An angry reply rose to the king's lips, but he checked himself. Gunther quickly saw what was going on, and esteem for the changed being who was now standing before him, made his eye glisten.

The king had not once mentioned the queen's name. He had not, as would have been so natural, asked him who had been her physician for many years, what he thought of her appearance. Gunther was just on the point of mentioning her, when the king, contracting his brows, asked :

"Have you ever committed an act which you repented of?"

"Your Majesty—my name is Wilhelm Gunther. My life has been a hard struggle and I have often stumbled. I have been young and have grown old, and have come to see that all men receive their true deserts."

"And has it proven so in your case?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, I thank you for asking me that question. And now let me confess.—What I am about to say is without the slightest tinge of bitterness. When I regard a fact as accomplished, I have done with it. I therefore speak of it without embarrassment, just as if I were explaining the operation of some law of nature. Yes, Your Majesty, I have richly deserved all that has happened to me. I was most graciously dismissed from Your Majesty's favor, and it was but just that it should be so."

"That was not what I meant. I had no desire to allude to it. On the contrary—"

"Permit me, Your Majesty, to explain the logical line of justice, as I have understood it. Under deeply painful circumstances, I misconceived my duty as a man, and as the friend and servant of Your Majesty."

"You?" asked the king.

"Yes, I! And that I meant it for the best, is no excuse. We all mean to be good, but we have all of us an equal right to be wise. I endeavored to lead the queen to an elevated plain, from which the petty events of life would appear trifling and easily borne. It was a grievous error. It was my duty to avoid all interference, unless I could avert the impending conflict. You acted rightly and, at the same time, benefited the queen by sending me away. Isolated from every influence, even that of a friend, she could not but gain strength as she has done."

A tear glistened in the king's eyes. He pressed his left hand to his heart, as if to repress a thought that he did not care to reveal.

"I am happy," said he at last, "that my life has made me acquainted with such men as you and our dear Bronnen. We only partially make ourselves what we are. Consciously or unconsciously, we are formed by those with whom we associate."

He pressed Gunther's hand in his, and Gunther was happy to feel that the king's heroic self-glorification was completely subdued—the king's confession being a convincing proof of this.

"Papa!" called a boy's voice from the terrace, "Papa!"

They turned in the direction from which the voice had come. The queen, surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of her court,

was sitting on the terrace. With anxious eyes, she had followed every movement of the two men. What might they be speaking of? Were these Elysian days to be disturbed by the old and forgotten wrong?

And now, when she saw the king take Gunther's hand in his own and hold it for a long while, she embraced the prince, kissed him, and then said:

"Call papa."

The two men turned around and with calm and happy countenances, the sight of which was even more refreshing than that of the beautiful and lofty mountains, came upon the terrace. The king kissed the queen's hand, and, for the first time in years, she pressed it against his lips.

When Gunther was taking his leave, the king said:

"Present my compliments to your wife. I shall pay you a visit to-day, before dinner."

Madame Gunther was amazed when her husband informed her that the king was coming. In spite of all explanations, she could not understand how her husband could thus forgive and forget the injury that had been put upon him—for she could not help looking upon it as an injury and an affront, even though Gunther did not so regard it. For the first time in her life, he was unable to change her opinion. In Gunther's forgiving mood, she thought she detected a spirit of submissiveness which was only possible under a monarchy. Her old republican feelings were aroused.

The king and the queen came. The king found Madame Gunther's behavior shy and reserved. He could not know that she still regarded him with suppressed wrath. Was this the man, and ought there really to be one on earth, who could appoint or dismiss Gunther at will? They were standing by the stream that flowed through the garden, when the king said to Gunther:

"I am told that the crown prince's nurse lives in this neighborhood. Will you not have her come here some time?"

"Her majesty the queen does not wish to see her," replied Gunther.

"Do you know why?"

"It lies in the echo of certain sad memories," replied Gunther; and this passing allusion to Irma was the only time she was mentioned. In the short pause that followed these words, the stream murmured louder than before, as if it, too, had something to say.

On the second evening after the king's arrival, Bronnen came, accompanied by the intendant, and found the whole circle happy and complete.

A certain observance of form lent an added charm to country life. With constant freedom, there was yet the protecting presence of the accompanying court circle and servants. Wherever they fixed their resting-place, and wherever they lighted a fire in the for-

est, for the little prince's amusement, a numerous body of servants was always present, forming a ring to keep off intruding strangers. Paula's manner was calm and composed. Her every movement evinced power and grace. She neither thrust herself forward nor shunned observation. The knowledge that she was in her own home lent charming confidence to her deportment.

During the evening, Gunther's blind nephew, whose appointment as pianist to the queen had been confirmed, played in a masterly manner.

On the following morning he took his first leave of absence, in order, as he said, with a smile, to look about the neighborhood and visit old acquaintances.

The king prepared to go hunting.

CHAPTER XIV.

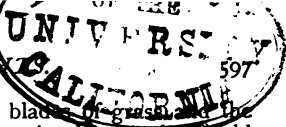
IT was in the morning. Gundel was telling her father how strange cousin Irmgard was. She hardly ever spoke a word; she tasted scarcely anything but a little milk, fresh from the cow; and she seemed so strange. She would lie for hours out on the cliff, where she could get a glimpse of the distant lake. The little pitchman was also puzzled by Irma's behavior. For some time past she had done no work, and had given up going with him when he went out to gather herbs.

"I'd like to ask the great doctor down there—the one I fetch the herbs for—what I ought to do," said he, "but Walpurga says I shan't. Besides that, I do n't see that there's anything the matter with our Irmgard. I thought of trying something, but I do n't know whether it would do any good with a human being. Now if a beast gets sick, all you've got to do is to cut out the sod that he's lying on and turn it, and then the beast will get well again. I wish I knew whether that would help a human being."

"Oh father!" replied Gundel, "that's awful. I'm afraid they'll soon put the sod on our dear Irmgard. She's so good; and when you speak to her, it seems as if she has to stop to think of what you're saying, and make up her mind what to answer."

Thus they talked together, and then separated to go about their work for the day, while Irma lay on her blue rug, now looking out at the wide world, now closing her eyes and thinking and dreaming to herself. Her life was a voiceless calm, as if she were part of the animate and inanimate world about her; as if she always had been and ever would remain here: a child of man, to whom no flower, no living thing on earth, nor bird soaring in the air was unknown. The mountains, the clouds, the bright day, the starry night—all were dear and familiar to her.

Irma, as was her wont, was lying on the mossy slope. She gazed into the distance and then her eyes sought the ground to



watch the busy life stirring among the blades of grass and the mosses. Now and then, she would unconsciously raise the mould with her finger and find pine-needles which had accumulated for years and years, and, below them, the *débris* of plants that had been decayed since the world began ; hers was the first human eye that rested upon them.

The cows often approached, and grazed near by without disturbing her. She could hear their breathing, and yet did not move. Now and then, the leading cow would stand before her and, with head lifted on high, gaze at the distant landscape. Then it would go on feeding, and, at times, would keep the fodder in its mouth as if it had, while looking at the prostrate form, forgotten that it wanted to eat.

Awake or dreaming, a wonderful life opened up to Irma. The more she rested, the greater was her yearning for rest. Indescribable weariness seemed to have seized upon her. Work and thought wearied her as they had never done in all the years she had passed in the world. She often tried to arouse herself, but could not. She found a peculiar pleasure in this feeling of heaviness, in this resting on the ground. Hundreds of songs and entire musical works passed through her mind. Myriad thoughts arose and floated away with the light breath of air. Nothing could be seized and retained.

It was hot noonday. The heat was intense. There was not a breath of air, even up among the mountains, and the cows were resting in the shade. Irma had walked out alone. The little pitchman had gone to town to deliver some parcels of herbs. Irma wandered on further and further, and at last reached the source of the brook. She was sitting by the broad basin into which the water fell, and which reflected the dark shadows of the overhanging trees. Irma bent forward and saw her image reflected in the water. It was the first time, in many years, that she had seen it and she now greeted it with a smile. Not a breath of air was stirring ; not a sound was heard.

Irma looked about her, and then, hurriedly undressing herself, plunged into the water. She swam about, dived and rose to the surface again, and a feeling of unexpected delight came over her. Only the sun that shone through the branches for a moment, beheld that wondrous lovely form.

All was silent again. Irma had dressed herself and lay dreamily at the edge of the woods, while sweet melodies passed through her soul.

Suddenly, she heard her name called again and again, and in a loud voice. She answered as loud as she could, and at last Gundel came up and said :

"Irmgard, come to the cottage right away. There's a gentleman there with a servant, and he wants to speak to you."

Irma, who had partly raised herself, lay down again. She felt a heart pang. What could it be? Had her time come? and must she again return to the busy world?

She arose to her feet and asked:

"Do n't you know who it is?"

"No, but he says he spent the night with us some years ago. He's a tall, handsome young man; but, poor man, he's stone blind."

"The blind man wandering?" thought Irma to herself, turning towards the hut.

"God greet you!" cried she, while still distant.

"Yes, that's your voice," replied the blind man, stretching out his arms and opening and closing his hands. "Come! Come nearer. Give me your hand!" He quickly drew off his gloves with his teeth, and his face wore a strange expression. Irma drew near and took his delicate, white hand in hers.

"Your hand trembles!" he exclaimed. "Does it frighten you to see me blind?"

Irma could not speak, and nodded as if the blind man could see what she did.

The sun's rays fell directly upon the face of the unfortunate one, and his sightless eyes stared into vacancy.

"You've grown thinner than you were," said the blind man. "May I pass my hand over your face?"

"Yes," replied Irma, closing her eyes.

"You're not as beautiful as you were two years ago. Your eyelids are hot and heavy. You must have been grieving. Can I help you? I'm not rich, but I can still do something."

"Thank you. I've learned to help myself." Being addressed in High German, Irma had involuntarily replied in pure German, without a trace of dialect.

The stranger started, turned his head to the right and left, and, while doing so, stretched out his neck so far that it was almost unpleasant to look at him.

Taking him by the hand, Irma led him to the bench in front of the cottage. She felt a tremor while holding this fine and delicate hand in hers, but, gathering all her strength, she repressed it. She sat down by the blind man, and asked him how he had happened to come there.

"You remember," said he, "that when I was with you last, I knew what my fate would be. I wrestled with myself for a long while and learned to know how to bear it. We know that we must all die, and yet we can be cheerful; and I knew that I must lose my sight and became cheerful, too."

Irma heaved a deep sigh.

"Do you understand what I mean?" asked the blind man.

"Yes, indeed, Go on, I like to hear your voice."

"I knew it, and that's why I have come to you. I was down at the farm, but they were all out harvesting, and the child's maid told me that you were up here, and so I came to you. I walked a good part of this way before, when I was overtaken by the storm. and I can now, in memory, renew the pleasure with which I once beheld these mountains. What I then told you I intended to do, has come to pass. I have all the beautiful landscapes within me. I can see the sparkling sunlight, the brook leaping over the rocks, the sparkling lake, and the trees standing side by side in the peaceful forest. I kept constantly telling my guide where we were. He was quite beside himself to think that I knew it all so well. But the best of it all is that I have beautiful human images in my mind. My greatest desire was to see you once more. I say 'to see you,'—I mean, to hear you speak, but I see you when you speak."

Irma replied, telling him how well she understood and sympathized with him; and when she spoke to him of the difficulty of walking, how the groping foot first seeks the ground before the muscles are straightened to take a step, the blind man asked, with surprise:

"And how do you know that?" He again stretched out his head and bent it back in the same unpleasant manner as before.

"I once knew a blind man who told me. It is terrible to think that you're obliged to depend upon a stranger. Blind Gloster implores his guide not to forsake him."

"Maiden! Who are you? Was it you who spoke? It was your voice—or is there some one with you? How do you know that?"

"I read it once," said Irma, biting her lips till the blood almost came. "I read it once," she repeated, forcing herself to use the dialect again.

The blind man's head bent low and he held his hands between his knees. A convulsive movement passed over his fine youthful features, as if tears were ineffectually struggling to escape. He leaned his head back against the wall, and at last said:

"So you can read, and so intelligently. Could you?—No, I'll not ask you."

"Ask me what you will. I feel kindly towards you and have often thought of you."

"Did you? You, too?" cried he hurriedly, while he moved his head about in the same strange manner as before. "Maiden!" said he, "give me your hand once more. Tell me, could you give me this hand and let your eyes be mine?"

"Good-sir," said Irma, interrupting him, "I should like to feel that your coming here and your going hence were for the best. I think that I can and ought to tell you all. This is the second time I've seen you—"

"I've seen you but once, and yet I shall never forget your face," said the blind man.

"Come with me. I'll lead you, and when we're alone I'll tell you all and prove how grateful I am for your kindness."

"There must be a spot somewhere hereabouts, from which a glimpse of the lake beyond the mountains can be obtained," replied the blind man. "Can you lead me there?"

"Certainly," said Irma, startled at this wonderful inner life. She led him, across the meadow, to the mountain side.

"Sit down here," said she, "and I'll sit beside you. What I am about to tell you is for you alone. Remember, only for you!"

He raised his hand and exclaimed: "I swear!"

"You need no oath," replied Irma. "Know then that I am one who has vanished from the fashionable world. Ask not for my name. Life in all its splendor was mine, and yet I walked in darkness. I was a wretched worldling! I had sunk so low that I sought to destroy myself. If it were only possible, I would gladly fly away with you—just as the birds are flying—through the rosy, golden glow of evening, and vanish into infinite space. But I've learned to know that life is a duty, and that all we have and are in this world depends upon our finding the world within ourselves and ourselves in the world. You now bear the world within you, where none can take it from you. We can call nothing ours, unless we possess it in that way. And when death comes at last, it takes nothing from us, but simply gives us back to the world—"

"Maiden!" suddenly exclaimed the blind man, "what are you doing? Who are you? No mortal speaks thus! Must I become superstitious? Must I believe in angels? Is there some one with you? Who can it be? Who are you? Give me your hand!"

"Be calm: 't is I," said Irma, offering him her hand, which he kissed again and again. She withdrew it and, passing it over his face, said:

"Be calm. I've merely looked out into the world just as you have already done, and while we sit here—two children of the world and yet forgotten by it—we are happy, for we belong to eternity. May you be happy, and may your soul, on wings of music, soar far above all earthly cares! Take my hand once more. Come, let me lead you hence."

Without uttering a word on the way, he suffered Irma to lead him towards the cottage.

When they reached it, he called for his guide and his servant, in a tone of authority.

"Are you going already?" asked Irma.

Leaning on his servant's arm, he left the cottage without answering her.

She again offered him her hand with the words: "The world in us, and ourselves in the world!"

His only reply was a nod, his features again twitched convulsively, as if he were trying to repress his tears.

He had already proceeded as far as the edge of the woods, when he turned around and called out :

"Come here, maiden. I've something to tell you."

She went up to him and he said :

"I'm a nephew of Doctor Gunther, who was formerly physician to the king, and now lives but a short distance from here, in yonder little town. I live with him and am pianist to the queen. If you ever need help, send to me, or to my uncle. He'll help you, I am sure. But, depend upon it, I shall mention you to no one."

Having said this, he hurriedly turned on his heel and, leaning on his servant, descended the mountain.

Irma remained there, looking after him.

Was Gunther alive? And in her very neighborhood?

And now another being carried her half-disclosed life-secret about with him.

The blind man entered the woods and soon disappeared from view. Irma, with eyes bent on the ground, returned to her resting-place, where she remained gazing into the dim distance until night approached.

Over in the woods, she beheld a strange-looking, gray cloud with white, glowing edges. It stood as firmly as if it were a wall. Suddenly, as if exhaled from the earth, a gust of wind arose, so violent that the trees bent under its force.

She hurried towards the cottage, and found that the little pitch-man had returned.

"I'm afraid we'll have a storm to-night," said he. "The moon is n't up yet and does n't rise till late, and that's a sign of bad weather."

He went out again, in order to drive in the cows. The boy had gone after the goats, which had strayed off for some distance.

CHAPTER XV.

"**H**OW the wind blows!" exclaimed Gundel, quite out of breath. It had required all her strength to close the door. "What a storm! There never was such a gust before. Why, the wind's just as hot as if it were blown out of an oven."

She got up quickly and, filling a cup with water, emptied it on the fire that burned on the hearth.

"What are you doing?" cried Irma.

"We must n't have a fire now," replied Gundel, and, after that, they sat there in the dark room, almost stifled by the smoke, for the storm raged so wildly that they dared not open a window.

"If father were only home," said Gundel; "I hope, for God's sake, he'll get home safe!"

Her last words were drowned by a sudden peal of thunder that reverberated from the mountains, with a crash as if the whole world were being destroyed. And now the wind raged and stormed more violently than before. The firmly built hut seemed to totter, the roof trembled, and one of the great boulders with which it had been secured fell to the ground.

"Give me your hand!" cried Gundel, in the dark. "If we must die—let's pray." She prayed aloud, but the crashing thunder drowned her voice. Suddenly the noise changed, and it sounded as if countless iron hammers were descending on the roof; the rattling, pounding, and rumbling created a furious din.

"That's hail!" shrieked Gundel, putting her mouth to Irma's ear.

The thunder and hail continued, and, ever and anon, the lightning would flash through the smoke and darkness, causing the two girls to appear, in each other's eyes, as if transported to the infernal regions. The hailstones seemed to impel each other forward. Now they would descend with mighty force; then the fury of the storm would abate and they would fall more gently and steadily than before, as if the raging mountain demon had stopped to take breath, before again venting his ire on the mortals who had ventured to build a cottage on his lofty domain.

The lowing of the cows and the ringing of their bells were heard above the rattling hail.

"I opened the stable-door, but the wind must have blown it shut," exclaimed Gundel; and, forgetting her own trouble, she hurried out. She came back in a hurry and, placing an inverted pail on her head, went out again. Irma followed her example, and the two of them ducked their heads while the great hailstones rattled against the pails. Gundel tried to open the stable-door, but the cows crowded about her so that she was thrown to the ground. In the midst of the noise, Irma heard Gundel's piercing cry. The bellowing, trembling leader cow was standing near Irma.

"Come along!" said Irma, seizing the cow by one of its horns. It obeyed her, and the other cows made way. Irma found Gundel, and, having helped her up, the two opened the stable-door, but were almost crushed to death, for the cows all tried to get in at once. They each had but one hand free, as the other was needed to hold the pail. They succeeded in getting to the wall and, at last, when all the cows were in the stable, the two girls waded through the hail with which the ground was thickly covered, and regained the cottage. They groped about until they found the hearth and sat down by it. And the two lonely, forlorn children sat there in the dark, while the storm raged without.

"I feel sure," cried Gundel, "that father must have found shelter somewhere. He knows every overhanging rock and—O God!" she suddenly cried, "just think of the poor blind man, out in such

weather! Has the hail cut your hand and back, the way it did mine?" said she, crying, and nestling close to Irma.

"No, I feel nothing," replied Irma, and it really seemed as if physical pain could not affect her. She, too, had thought of the blind man, and also of the king whom filial ingratitude had turned out into the stormy night. But hail or wind were not half so violent as her regret that, yielding to pity, she had allowed a man to pass his hand across her face.

Is all lost again? Is all that has cost so great a struggle, sacrificed? wofully asked an inner voice—and yet she felt conscious of her purity.

"Thank God! it's only raining now," said Gundel, at last. She struck a light, and the two looked at each other, as if they had just emerged from depths of darkness. The floor was wet with the water that had dripped from their clothes.

"Are you at home?" exclaimed a voice from without. The door opened and the little pitchman entered, carrying a young kid in his arms.

"Thank God! you're safe and sound," he exclaimed, laying the kid down by the empty fireplace. With his sleeve, which was far wetter than either, he wiped the water from his eyes and forehead. Then he took a bottle of gentian brandy from the upper shelf and, after taking a drink, and forcing Gundel and Irma to do likewise, he went on to say: "I've gone through a good deal in my time, but never anything like this. I know every tree and every rock for miles, but I seemed to have lost my way. While I stood there in the midst of the storm, I heard a chamois doe bleating pitifully, and I went up to her and there she stood, with the young kid that had just been born. It had hardly come into the world, before the hail tried to beat it to death. When the mother saw me, she ran away, but came back again and placed herself over the young kid, so that the hail should n't strike it, but her instead. I went near her, but the mother ran away again. I picked up the young one and, just as we were going on to look for shelter, I heard human voices. Two people were calling to a third one, who was roaring and screaming. When the lightning flashed, I saw that he was lying on the ground, unable to move.

"'Honored master, just lean on us; we'll soon find shelter,' I heard them saying, and when the lightning flashed again, I saw that we were near the Witches' Table. So I called out to them: 'The Witches' Table is over yonder.' Then there was another flash, and I saw that the two men who had been standing had also fallen down. They told me, afterward, that they had been afraid of me, and I could n't think hard of them. In such a storm, and on such a night, one would almost believe in anything. I went up to them, told them who I was, and offered to lead them. It was hard work, though, to get along, for the blind man went on as if crazed, and

kept talking about a lost child. At last, safe and sound, but dripping with water, we got under the Witches' Table, and there we lay. And whenever it lightened we could see the hailstones dancing on the rocks and beating against the trees. We waited until it stopped hailing, and the blind man told me that the next time I came down to the apothecary's, in the town, he would give me a gold piece. The king's there and so is the queen. He promised to see to it that I should get the medal for saving a life, and a pension, in the bargain, for the rest of my days. And now, children, get to bed, for you're soaking wet. What ails you, Irmgard? Why do you shiver so?"

The little pitchman scolded Gundel for having let cousin Irmgard sit about in her wet clothes. Now and then the little kid would cry piteously and shiver all over, so that the little pitchman brought down his bed cover from the hay-loft and wrapped the kid in it. Then, with three fingers, he cleverly fed it with milk from a dish.

The little kid was soon asleep, and, in the room within, Irma was sleeping too.

"Thank God, you've had a good sleep," said Gundel, who was standing at Irma's bedside, late on the following morning. "How strange it seems! The hail did n't hurt you a bit; and just see how I look." She showed the marks, but quickly added: "That's no matter; it'll soon be over. Just look at the sky! Do n't it look as if it never could do any harm. Over by the stream, the lightning struck a tree and split it in two, and places where it used to be dry are covered with water. If I did n't feel it in every bone of my body, and could n't see it, I'd hardly believe there had ever been a storm. But we were lucky, after all. None of the cattle were hurt, and the cowboy is here, too. He crept away, down the valley, where there was no storm at all."

It was a clear, bracing morning. Here and there, there were still some large hailstones lying in the crevices of the rocks. The cows were grazing on the meadow, and the cowboy was singing merrily. He was proud that the goats were the best judges of the weather; while grazing, they had moved down towards the valley, and that was the surest sign that a storm was brewing.

At noon, Franz came up from the farm. The torrents of water that had rushed down into the valley, had led them to suppose that something had happened, and Walpurga had sent Franz to find out all about it. The hot, midday sun soon dried up everything, and the waters did not long remain on the heights. Irma went out to her favorite resting-place and, spreading her blue rug on the ground, lay down.

Suddenly, she heard the sounds of a bugle horn. What was it? Was it royalty, or a dream?

The sounds were repeated. Irma's heart beat violently. Something drew near. She could hear it panting, as it forced its way

through the crackling brush. She looked up and saw a stag rushing through the clearing near by, and the huntsmen pursuing and gaining upon it. Irma passed her hand over her eyes—she looked once more— It was the king and his suite.

Springing from his horse, the chief piqueur exclaimed: "The stag broke through here, Your Majesty. Here is the trail." He dipped his finger in the blood and showed it to the king. The king looked around— Did he feel the glance directed upon him from the thicket? The glance that had once made him so happy, but that had, for him, been so long extinguished? He missed his stirrup; the horse reared wildly. Irma bent down, with her face against the mossy turf. She felt as if the whole hunt, as if all the horses' hoofs, were passing over her. She bit the grass on which she lay. She dug her hands into the earth. She feared to shriek aloud.

When she got up, all was quiet. She stared about her. Had it been a dream? In the distance, she heard the report of a gun and the sound of the bugle. The stag had fallen.

If one could die in that way, thought Irma to herself, sinking back on the moss, and weeping.

She arose. A storm-laden cloud had once more arisen within her soul, but it was for the last time. About her, all was clear and sunny. Hail and storm and lightning were forgotten. She went back to the hut, and often turned to look at the sun sinking in the west. And now, for the first time, she repaired to rest before nightfall. She was shivering with a fever-chill, and soon her cheeks were hot and red. She called the little pitchman to her bedside and asked him to give her a sheet of paper. Her hand trembled, while she wrote in pencil:

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

She told the little pitchman to hurry to town, to give this paper to the great doctor in person, and to conduct him to her at once. Then she turned away and was calm again.

"I'll give you something good," said the little pitchman, while, with broad-brimmed hat on his head, and mountain-staff in his hand, he stood before her. "You'll see, it'll do you good. I'll lay the kid down here at your feet; that'll do both o' you good. Shall I?"

Irma nodded assent.

The little pitchman did as he said he would. The kid looked up sleepily at Irma, and she smiled on it in return. Both soon closed their eyes.

Wandering in the dark, the little pitchman descended into the valley.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOWN in the valley, it had been raining all day long. What had been hail and thunder up among the mountains, had turned to rain, and occasional gleams of blue sky served to show that there was fair weather above.

Towards evening, the storm cleared away. The queen, accompanied by the ladies of her court, among whom Madame Gunther and Paula were now included, was sitting in the large music-room, the doors of which were open. Paula had been singing to the queen, for the first time, and, on account of her embarrassment, Madame Gunther begged that she might not be asked to sing again that day.

The relation between the queen and Madame Gunther was a peculiar one. The queen was charmed with her sincerity and thoroughness, but she found it difficult to accustom herself to the presence of one who was so independent of her. She was, at one time, tempted to regard this as pettiness, for, on the very day that Madame Gunther had accepted the breastpin, she had said to the queen: "Your Majesty, it will never do, unless you accept a present from me in return," saying which, she gave the queen a handsomely-bound book, which a brother of hers, a physician residing in America, had written, on the subject of slavery. The queen accepted it with thanks, and Madame Gunther felt quite relieved, although it frequently cost her an effort to translate, as it were, all that she wished to say, in order to clothe it in the proper court costume, for she took a pride in rejecting prescribed forms.

The queen enquired why they saw so little of the elder daughter, the professor's widow. Madame Gunther replied that, as Bronnen and their nephew were visiting them, and as there was much to look after in the house, Cornelia had gladly assumed these duties. It always seemed like a new truth to the queen, or like tidings from some strange world, to find that the daily wants of life required special attention and did not provide for themselves.

The weather exerted a depressing influence on the spirits of all. Here in the country, and especially in this little dairy-farm, where they missed many comforts, and where, on account of the small amount of room, they were prevented from scattering and seeking various diversions, the effects of the weather were all the more noticeable and unpleasant.

Their delight in anticipation of the morrow was all the greater, as it promised to be a bright day.

It was agreed that they should all meet, at dinner, near the second waterfall, and that the king would join them there.

The king was in his cabinet, engaged with Bronnen. The new telegraph was carrying many messages to and fro. Gunther, the

intendant, Sixtus and several other gentlemen were smoking their cigars and walking under the drooping trees of the avenue, which the evening sun was now lighting up with a thousand brilliant hues.

The ladies in the music-room maintained that the Alpine glow (Alpenglühén) could be seen that day. They naturally expected to see it daily, although it is an exceedingly rare phenomenon.

The night had come on, and the king was sitting at the card-table, with Gunther and two of the gentlemen-in-waiting.

A servant came in and informed Gunther that there was a man outside who wished to speak with him at once. Gunther gave his cards to the ever-obliging intendant, and went out where, leaning on his great Alpine staff, his broad-brimmed, crumpled hat in his hand, and his rug thrown over him, stood the little pitchman. He kept his left hand in his pocket, and when Gunther came up to him, he said :

"Here 's a paper for you."

Gunther read the note, and then rubbed his eyes and passed his hand across his face, as if to awaken himself.

"Who sent you?" he asked.

"I guess that 'll tell you— Our Irmgard."

Gunther started at the mention of the name, here before the very door, when within sat the king and the queen—

He went up to the lamp in the corridor, and read the note again. There it stood :

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

This man, who had a right to boast that he was always calm and composed, was obliged to support himself by the balusters, and it was some time before he could utter a word. When he looked up, his glance met that of the little pitchman.

"Who are you?" he asked, at last.

"I 'm from the freehold farm. Walpurga 's my neice—"

"Very well; go outside and wait for me. I 'll be there directly."

The little pitchman went out, and Gunther summoned all his self-command, in order to return to the card-room to excuse himself, and say that he had been summoned to the bedside of one who was dangerously ill. He scarcely knew how he could, without betraying his emotion, mention this to those who were so directly concerned, but he hoped to do so, nevertheless.

At that moment, he fortunately met Paula and Bronnen, who had been walking in the garden and were just about to enter the house.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Gunther, addressing them. "Paula, send me my hat; and you, dear Bronnen, present my excuses to their majesties, and tell them I am required instantly, by one who is dangerously ill. Pray do this without exciting atten-

tion ; and, Paula, don't mention it to your mother until you 're on the way home. I shall be gone all night."

"Can't Dr. Sixtus go?" asked Bronnen.

"No. Pray ask me no more. I shall be home early to-morrow morning ; but if I don't come, I will meet you by the waterfall, at dinner-time."

Bronnen and Paula went into the house, and, a few moments later, a lackey brought Gunther his hat.

Gunther hurried off with the little pitchman. Only once did he turn back to look at the brilliantly-lighted windows, and to think of those who were sitting within, void of care and foreboding naught. How startled they would be if they had heard the tidings that affected him so powerfully. On the way to his house, he had but little to say to the little pitchman. He did not care to question him more closely, for he feared lest some answer might be overheard, and thus prematurely betray the secret. He was still, in his own mind, endeavoring to devise some plan by which all could be arranged and adjusted.

It was not until they drew near the house, that Gunther asked :

"What ails the patient? What does she complain of?"

"She do n't complain of anything. She's got a hot fever, and she has been coughing for a long time."

"Has she her perfect senses?"

"Just the same as ever ; but Gundel, my daughter, says she sometimes calls out in her sleep : 'Victory!'"

"Just wait here," said Gunther, when they reached the house. "I'll send you something to eat and drink ; but tell no one who sent you here."

Cornelia was sitting near the lamp and reading to her blind cousin. He had only told her of the terrors of the hailstorm ; his heart-sufferings he had kept to himself. He had been sleeping nearly all day, and now felt refreshed. Cornelia was alarmed when she saw her father, but he soon quieted her. His medicine-chest and some well-sealed packages of refreshing and strengthening food, were soon in readiness, and were packed upon the mule. Gunther rode off, the little pitchman walking by his side. The face of the latter was scarcely visible, for his broad-brimmed hat had not yet recovered from the effects of yesterday's storm. It was not until they had left the town behind them, that Gunther asked :

"How far have we to go?"

"It takes three hours on foot, but on horseback it's a full hour more."

When they entered the forest, Gunther halted and said :

"Come near. So you are Walpurga's uncle?"

"To be sure. I'm her mother's own and only brother, for the two others died young."

"What do you call the sick girl?"

"Irmgard; that's her name."

"And how long has she been with you?"

"Ever since Hansei bought the farm. She came with us then from the lake. She was sick, and they say she's a little bit out of her mind; but I do n't believe a word of it. She's got her right senses; rather too much than too little."

"And do n't you know her family name?" asked Gunther.

"I never asked," and the little pitchman, with great volubility, went on to tell all he knew of Irmgard's life and how, for years, she had worn a bandage on her forehead, and had never taken it off until she had gone up to the mountain meadow. He described her life so touchingly that Gunther stopped and, taking the old man by the hand, said:

"You're a good man."

Uncle Peter did not dispute this, but maintained that, in all the world, there was no one so good as Irmgard.

Rapid rivulets crossed their path in many places, and the little pitchman told Gunther of the storm of the previous night; how terrible it is when, all of a sudden, the air seems filled with stones that pound away at one, and how he had helped the blind man, and also what had been promised him. He would often take hold of the mule's bridle and guide it down some steep descent, through a brook and then up the hill again.

"You must have gone through a good deal yourself, Doctor," said the little pitchman. He would have liked his companion to entertain him by the way. He thought that one sitting on the mule could talk far more comfortably than he who was walking by his side. He could feel it in his chest that to talk while going up hill, was no easy matter. As if divining this, Gunther alighted when they reached a level place, and made the little pitchman mount. After much persuasion, Uncle Peter at last consented and got up; but as soon as they began to ascend again, he dismounted, and insisted on Gunther's riding.

"If our Irmgard wants to leave us now," said the little pitchman, "I'd willingly give her up to you, Doctor. She can play the zither splendidly, and when she's well again, you can teach her anything. Everything comes easy to her. But I hope she'll stay with us. She's shy and does n't like to go among people."

It seemed as if he had divined Gunther's very thoughts, for the Doctor had been asking himself how he could take Irma to his house, and yet keep the court ignorant of her existence. In his mind's eye, he already saw her sitting beside his wife and Cornelia, and he felt that he had gained a daughter who would fill Paula's place.

It was dark in the forest and the stars were gleaming overhead.

"It's past midnight," said the little pitchman, when they reached

the crest of a projecting hill. "The moon's coming up over there."

Gunther looked back and saw the half-moon rising and looking like a ruin suspended in the vast firmament.

"There's some of our cows already," said the little pitchman, and his voice grew brighter. "That's Blackbird, with the ding-dong bell. She always strays furthest of all; but we'll be home in less than half an hour, at any rate."

They went on in silence, and at last reached the hut. A ray of light shone through the opening in the closed window-shutter.

Gunther entered.

"I'll go in first and tell her the gentleman's here," said the little pitchman, softly.

Gunther assented.

He soon came out again and said:

"She's asleep, but her cheeks are as red as fire, and Gundel says that she often called out, in her sleep: 'Father!' and sometimes, 'Victory.' She must be having pleasant dreams."

Gunther entered the cottage.

At the sight of Irma he seemed as if paralyzed.

"What's that?" he asked the little pitchman, when the kid at Irma's feet raised its head and stared at him.

"It's a little chamois kid that I found yesterday. She's very fond of it," answered the little pitchman in a whisper.

Gunther requested the little pitchman and Gundel to leave the room and then sat down silently at Irma's bedside. He felt her pulse and touched her forehead, and the little pitchman, who had lingered in the room, asked: "How is she?"

Gunther shrugged his shoulders and beckoned him to go out.

The little pitchman hurried up to the hay-loft, awakened Franz, and ordered him to hurry down to his master and mistress and tell them to come up directly, for Irmgard was very sick.

He lay down on the hay, feeling as if every bone in his body were broken. He had never before been so tired, but he could neither rest nor sleep, and was soon standing in front of the cottage, listening at the window.

Meanwhile, Gunther remained with the patient. She moved now and then, but did not open her eyes. The kid, at her feet was also sleeping again.

Gunther had removed the light from the room, and now sat in the dark.

"The day is coming, let me see the daylight!" cried Irma, suddenly starting up.

A gray streak of light fell through the opening in the shutter.

"Let me see the daylight," said Irma again, and the little pitchman outside opened the shutters. A flood of light poured into the chamber. A radiant glow passed over Irma's countenance. She

stretched out both hands to Gunther. He clasped them, and she kissed his hands with her feverish lips.

"You have achieved great results," said Gunther. "You have shown a power that I cannot but admire. Hold fast to it."

"I thank you! Through you, my father returns to me. Lay your hand upon my forehead."

"I place my hand upon your forehead and, in your father's spirit I bless you, and with this kiss I kiss away all your burdens. You are free!"

Irma lay there quietly, and Gunther's hand lay on her brow, while, out of doors, the rosy tint of morn ascended higher and higher, and at last the light flooded the room with its golden glow.

Gunther went out and brought a tonic draught for Irma. It revived and refreshed her.

"I know that I am about to die," she said in a clear voice, "and I am happy that I have lived in consciousness and can die in consciousness."

She gave her journal to Gunther and told him that the wish she had there expressed, in relation to her place of burial, need not be regarded; that the uncle knew which had been her favorite spot, and that she wished to be buried there, with nothing to mark her grave.

Gunther had, before this, said that he had held many a dying hand in his—he had never sat by a deathbed like that of Irma's.

CHAPTER XVII.

"**I** KNEW it! I felt it must come!" cried Walpurga when Franz brought the news of Irma's illness. "I knew she'd never come back!" she repeated again and again, weeping, wringing her hands, and praying by turns.

"That won't help any," said Hansei, laying his hand on her shoulder. "Get up; you're not like this at other times. Come, may be it is n't so bad after all; and even if it should be, this is no time to cry and weep; we must do all that can be done."

"What can I do? What shall I do?" said Walpurga, turning her tearful face to Hansei.

He helped her up and said:

"Franz says there's a doctor up there, who has a medicine chest with him. And now let's eat something and then go up to her."

"Oh dear Lord, I can't walk three steps; I feel as if my limbs were broken."

"Then you'd better stay here and I'll go up."

"Would you leave me here alone? What am I to do then?"

"I do n't know what. Go to bed; perhaps you can sleep."

"I do n't want to go to bed; I do n't want to sleep; I do n't want anything. I'll go along, too, and, if I die on the way, I can't help it."

"Do n't talk so ! you wrong me and the children when you do," Hansei was about to say, but he made a rapid movement, as if to repress the words. "There's no need of saying that," thought he ; "when women, filled with pity for themselves, begin to complain of their lot, they do n't know what they say."

Hansei brought his wife her best clothes, for she was so agitated that she scarcely knew where they were, or how to put them on. Hansei proved quite a clever valet.

"Now you must put your shoes on yourself," said he, at last.

Walpurga could not help smiling through her tears. It was not until then that she perceived how kindly and faithfully he had helped her, and, with a bright voice, she said : "Yes, so I can ; you've helped me, and now I feel that I can walk."

Hansei had the meal brought in and, after placing his mountain staff, his hunting bag and his hat in readiness, he sat down to eat. Walpurga was also obliged to sit down, although she ate but little. One of Hansei's great virtues was that he could eat heartily at any time. He did full justice to the meal, and his manner seemed to say that when one has satisfied his hunger, he is better prepared for any undertaking.

Before leaving, he cut off a large piece of bread and put it in his pocket.

The children were consigned to the care of the upper servant, and one of the laboring women was also charged to remain in the house. Hansei and his wife started for the meadow.

They had already gone some distance, when Burgei came running after them, crying : "I want to go along ; I want to go to Cousin Irmgard."

There was no help for it. They were obliged to take the child with them, for they were afraid to let her go back alone and neither of them cared to take her back.

"You're a naughty child, a very naughty child ! And now I've got to carry you, a big girl like you," said Walpurga, taking the child in her arms. Hansei nodded, with a pleased air. It was well the child was with them, for then his wife, who was apt to go off into extremes, would not become so violent if the worst should happen.

Walpurga, who had at first thought that she could not walk alone, now carried the child and stepped out bravely.

"Let Burgei walk for awhile, and when she gets tired again, I'll carry her," said Hansei.

As long as the path was wide enough, the child walked between its parents, and when it grew narrower, they let her run on ahead. When they found that they could get on but slowly, on account of the child, Hansei took her up in his arms, where she soon fell asleep.

Walpurga then softly whispered to Hansei :

"I must tell you now who our Irmgard is."

• “And I tell you I do n't want to know. She must tell me herself, if she lives; and if she's dead, you can tell me then, just as well.”

• “Dead!” cried Walpurga, “Do you know more than I do? Did Franz tell you anything in secret?”

• “Franz told me nothing but what you've heard.”

• “But why do you talk about death in that way?”

• “Because one who's very sick can easily die. But do be calm.”

• “Yes, yes; I hardly know that we are in the woods and I feel as if I could n't see a thing. Stop a moment! There's a doctor up there. He knows her, and others who know her will come, too. The man who came to see us the other day is her brother, and now they'll go and take our Irmgard away with them.”

• “If she's in her right mind, and wants to go of her own free will, we can't say anything against it,” said Hansei, “but this I do say, and no one will move me from it. As long as she's so sick that she can't say what she wants, I won't let them do a thing to her. I'm Hansei, and I'm her protector; nothing shall happen to her— All I ask of you, is to stand by me and not interfere. You know when I say a thing, I mean it.”

• “Yes, yes, you're right!” said Walpurga. Hansei's resolute words seemed to infuse her with new strength, for she went up the steep mountain path without the slightest difficulty. It almost seemed as if Hansei had been carrying her as well as the child. Moved by this thought, she suddenly said:

• “Do you remember when you once wanted to carry me, at home by the lake? Oh, dear me, it seems as if we must have been very different beings then, for we knew nothing at all of the world.”

• “We're none the worse off, for knowing and having some of it!” replied Hansei, in a loud voice, and awakening the child.

• “There, now; run along again,” said he to Burgei.

• They rested for a little while. Hansei remembered the piece of bread that he had put in his pocket and, cutting off a bit of it, he said, while pointing towards the valley with his knife: “Our brook runs down through there, and it's only an hour's distance from here to the little town where Stasi lives.”

• “Only an hour from here?” exclaimed Walpurga. “Then I'll walk over there. She's the best, the only help. You go on with the child, straight up to the hut. I'll soon follow you by way of the town, and I'll bring something good with me.”

• “Wife! Have you gone mad? Do n't make me crazy, too. Do you want to run off, when you're so near the dying one?”

• “Then I must tell you. The queen is down there and she alone can help her. God be with you, Hansei, and with you too, Burgei. I'll soon follow after you.”

• Away she ran, through the forest, along the stream, and towards the town.

"Where's mother? Mother! mother!" cried the child.

"Be quiet!" said Hansei, "Mother has another child down there, and he's a prince and will send you golden clothes."

"Is it an enchanted prince that mother is going to free from a spell?" asked the child.

"Yes, he's enchanted," said Hansei, endeavoring to quiet her.

"But what was he changed into?" asked the child.

"Into a cuckoo; but not another word now; be quiet."

Filled with strange thoughts, the father and child went up the mountain. Hansei could not understand how, at such a moment, his wife could leave her friend and go to the queen—. Perhaps they were bound together in some way? He shook his head. Matters that he could not disentangle, he always put away from him. The only thing was to see what could be done for the sick one; that was the most important matter. He squared his shoulders and was ready, if the physician thought well of it, to carry Irmgard in his arms, all the way down to the farm.

The child ran along, looking about it with wondering eyes. "He's calling! he's calling!" whispered she. "My mother will free you."

A cuckoo was really crying in the wood through which the noon-day sun was gleaming. His cry was sometimes near and then more distant, and at last, uttering his peculiar note, he flew over the travelers' heads.

Hansei, with the child, at last reached the shepherd's hut, where the uncle and Gundel, with sorrowful countenances, came forward to meet him.

"She's still alive, but she can't last long," said the uncle, wiping away his tears with his sleeve. "The doctor won't let any of us go in to her. But where's Walpurga?"

"She'll soon be here," replied Hansei. It was all he could do to keep off the cows, who knew their master and came up to him, as was their wont, in order to get a handful of salt. But he had forgotten to bring it with him, and all the salt they had up here was in the room that no one was permitted to enter.

Hansei ordered the cowboy to drive the cows off for some distance, so that the sick one might not hear the sound of the bells. That was all he could do for Irma. He sat down sadly on the bench before the hut, and, taking up a piece of carved wood which lay on the ground, he looked at it as carefully as if it were marble, and turned it again and again. He sat there for a long time. Then he put Burgei in Gundel's charge, and, hoping to meet his wife, went out along the road that led towards the little town. But it was long before she came. He went further into the forest, and was vexed, as he always was whenever he came up here, to think of yonder fine trees that were his own property, but which could not be felled, because no one could get up to the rocks



on which they were. A chattering magpie, sitting on the high branches of a beautiful pine, seemed to be making sport of him. After he had again and again passed his hand over his forehead, Hansei became conscious of the thoughts that had engaged him in the midst of all this trouble. There was nothing wrong in it—he was sure of that; but this was not the time to think of such things, and, as if the trouble were now dawning on him for the first time, he was overwhelmed with grief.

He turned back and went towards the hut. The Doctor was just coming out.

"You are the freehold farmer, I suppose?"

"Yes; and you're the doctor?"

"Yes."

"How is she?"

"I don't think she will die before evening."

Hansei's eyes filled with tears.

The uncle asked Gunther to allow him to fetch out the little kid. He granted his request. Stepping softly, he brought it out, gave it something to drink and, carrying it back again, placed it at the sick girl's feet.

"She opened her eyes and nodded to me, but she did n't say a word; and then she closed her eyes again," said the uncle.

Hansei begged that he might be permitted to see Irmgard once more. He was allowed to look through the crevice in the shutter. When Gunther again returned to the sick room, Hansei, weeping as if his heart would break, walked out along the road that led towards the town.

"Uncle's right: she's become like an angel," said he to himself.

The calf that was born on the first day that they had come up to the shepherd's hut, seemed conscious of its special claims on Hansei. In spite of all he could do, it kept running after him for salt. Hansei succeeded in satisfying it, by giving it the last morsel of bread that he had about him.

When he reached the woods, he was obliged to sit down; and there he wept and would, now and then, look about him as if bewildered. How could it be possible that the sun was still shining, the cuckoo crying, and the hawk screaming, while she who was up there was breathing her last—

What could Walpurga want of the queen? "Her place is up there," thought he to himself, again and again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOLLOWING the course of the brook, Walpurga had hurried down the mountain-side. She soon saw the little town and the farm house, on the roof of which a bright flag was fluttering.

Walpurga sat down on a rock by the stream, to recover her breath and rest for a few moments. A cuckoo flew over her head and up the mountain.

"That's a bad beginning," said she to herself.

She walked on towards the dairy-farm. Looking through the iron railing, she saw a boy playing about the garden. His hair fell over his shoulders, in long, fair curls. He wore a light dress and a hat with a feather. She felt as if her heart must burst and, with convulsive grip, she held fast to one of the iron rails of the fence, in order to support herself. Then she walked on towards the garden-gate.

"Frau von Gerloff—the prince—my child! my child!" she cried, while she rushed towards the prince and, kneeling down in the grass, kissed and embraced him.

The boy screamed.

"Oh, that's his voice!" cried Walpurga.

Startled for a moment, Frau von Gerloff stood there as if rooted to the spot. Then she approached and ordered Walpurga away. The servants also advanced and ordered her to go. The prince nestled against Frau von Gerloff, as if to hide himself.

Walpurga was still kneeling in the grass, and could not rise.

"He do n't know me any more, and I'm his nurse!" she cried, looking around confusedly at those about her. Her voice seemed to exert an influence on the child. It turned its face toward her. It was flushed with red and a tear still hung on his eyelashes, although his face was wreathed in smiles.

"God greet you!" said he. He had been taught this expression, on account of their sojourn in the country.

"He can say 'God greet you'—Oh, he can speak! Dear me, he can speak! Now just say, 'Walpurga,' child. Can you say, 'Walpurga?'"

"Walpurga," repeated the child.

The queen approached, attended by Countess Brinkenstein and Paula. Walpurga was about to hasten towards her, but the queen motioned her away, and ordered Frau von Gerloff to remove the prince. The prince was led out of the garden but he looked back at Walpurga, who nodded to him and quite forgot that she was in the presence of the queen, until the latter said:

"You have thrust yourself in here. You must certainly be aware that we did not desire to see you, and you know why."

"I do n't want to defend myself now. I've come for something else," urged poor Walpurga.

"What is it?" asked the queen.

Breathing heavily, and with frequent pauses, Walpurga hurriedly said:

"Your Majesty, one may be looked upon as wicked, or may not be looked upon at all, and yet be honest. You and I are both of

us in good health and can settle that some other time. But I have a few words to tell you—quite alone. Dear queen! for mercy's sake!—You'll be glad of it to your dying hour. Dear queen, you must die as well as the rest of us—I beg you, for pity's sake, listen to me alone, only for one minute! Send the others away, there's no time to lose!"

The queen motioned Countess Brinkenstein and Paula to withdraw. She was alone with Walpurga, and the latter, with throbbing heart, said:

"Irma lives!"

"What do you say?"

"She's dying; perhaps she's dead by this time!"

"I do not understand you. Are you mad?"

"No, dear queen. Sit down here on this seat. You're trembling all over. I've been awkward about it, but I could not help it. But it does not matter about me, now. Do with me what you choose—Irma lives—perhaps only this day, perhaps not even that long. Dear queen, you must go with me. You must go to her. It's all that's left her on earth—A single word—a hand—"

Countess Brinkenstein and Paula, who saw that the queen was leaning back, as pale as death, hurried to her assistance. As soon as she heard the rustling of their dresses, she raised herself and said:

"Walpurga, repeat what you have just told me."

Walpurga repeated that Irma was still alive, and added that she had been concealed with her for nearly four years, and that Gunther was now with her.

The two ladies seemed dumb with surprise, but Walpurga again turned to the queen and exclaimed:

"For God's sake, do not lose a minute! Come with me. Stasi, who once turned a prayer for the queen to me, lives in there. Dear queen, if you can't forgive others, how can they still pray for you? Just think how you felt in that solemn night, dear queen. Stand up, put all else away from you and hold fast to your good heart alone! Dear queen—"

"Do not annoy her majesty," said Countess Brinkenstein, interrupting her.

But Walpurga continued:

"Your Majesty, when you die, neither court ladies, nor anything else can help you. Leave all behind you, for one short hour of our life! Come with me alone, and ask me nothing more. He'll be dead before night. This very day, you can perform a good deed which will last for ever."

"I will—I must go to her!" said the queen, rising from her seat and walking towards the house. Her step was quick, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

"Your Majesty," said Countess Brinkenstein, remonstrating,

"the gracious king is out riding, and will be at the waterfall at dinner time. Will Your Majesty not wait until then?"

"No," replied the queen, in a determined voice, as if the question had interrupted a train of thought. "I desire," said she, "to be permitted to act upon my own responsibility."

"Your Majesty, there is no carriage-road to the mountain meadow," mildly added Countess Brinkenstein.

"But there's a bridle-path almost all the way up to the cottage," replied Walpurga. "And there's Stasi's husband; he's a forester and knows all the roads; I'll call him."

She hurried to the inspector's office and brought him out with her. He confirmed her statement that they could drive for a good distance, and that then they could ride.

The queen ordered him to precede them with saddle-horses. She retired to her apartments, and soon afterward, accompanied by Paula, Sixtus, and Walpurga, drove up the mountain. Two lackeys were sitting upon the rumble.

The betrothed of the man who had once loved Irma, and the wife of him whose love Irma had returned, sat side by side, hurrying to her death-bed. It was not until they were well on their way that they regained their composure.

There was but little that Walpurga could tell them about Irma's simple life, and she, therefore, made so much the more of the uncle's account of how Irma had traveled to the capital with him, in disguise, and how, at the summer palace, she had once more beheld the queen and the prince. Her recital was frequently interrupted by tears, while she went on to tell them how Irma had nursed her dying mother, and how her mother, who had known all, had, on her death-bed, given Irma her blessing.

The queen held her handkerchief to her eyes and silently extended her hand to Walpurga.

The more Walpurga told them, the more pure and exalted did Irma appear. Turning to Paula, the queen said:

"That is life in death—it must have required inconceivable courage."

"There are saints even in our days," replied Paula. "All that olden times knew of the great, the beautiful and the true, still exists in the world, even though it be scattered and hidden from view."

In the depth of her sorrow, the queen's eye beamed with conscious delight at the thought that, although Gunther was no longer with her, that which was best in him was now beside her in his child.

Walpurga was again obliged to tell them of that morning by the lake. And then she went on to speak of Irma's beautiful work, but she soon noticed that the queen was not listening, and stopped.

They drove on in silence.

They reached the end of the carriage road, and now continued the journey on horseback.

Soon after the queen's departure, the king and Bronnen returned from the chase. They felt refreshed and invigorated by the sport, and the king enquired whether the queen had already repaired to the waterfall, for she had expressed a desire to sketch there.

For the first time in her life, Countess Brinkenstein was so embarrassed that she almost lost her presence of mind. She, of course, felt a proper sympathy for Irma, but as long as she had lived in concealment, she should have died in concealment. Why should she thus agitate them all anew? She shook her head, in deprecation of this eccentric being who, long after one had mourned and forgotten her, was not even decently dead.

With faltering voice, she informed the king of what had happened, and scarcely ventured to tell him that, on her own responsibility and contrary to all court regulations, the queen had gone away, attended by no one but Paula and privy councilor Sixtus.

For some moments, the king neither moved nor uttered a word, but stood there with his eyes bent on the ground. The very earth at his feet seemed to tremble. Everything seemed unsteady as if in an earthquake, and terrors and despair overwhelmed him.

All that he had experienced, during long years of suffering and expiation, now rose before him again. He had striven and wrestled and made sacrifices, and no one had thanked him for all this; least of all his own heart, for he was burdened with guilt and yet anxious to do good, and forced to acknowledge, in all humility, that the power to do good was yet left him.

Trembling with agitation, he pressed his clenched hand against his brow. His cheeks burned, while his limbs shook with a feverish chill. God be thanked, she still lives! The guilt of death is lifted from my soul; and she, too, will see what I have suffered, and what I have become—

During the last few moments, he had lived the secret torments of past years over again. He now looked about him, as if emerging from another world. There had been no earthquake; the trees, the houses, the mountains still stood in their old places. He looked at Bronnen and, offering his icy cold hand, whispered almost inaudibly:

"And so the presentiment that you expressed at the hunting-seat, is true."

His voice was thick. He ordered fresh saddle-horses and a second carriage to be sent after him.

A few moments later, Bronnen and he were following in the wake of the queen.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE queen rode up the mountain, while Walpurga walked on by her side. The sun was already sinking in the west. Its slanting rays shone through the tree tops and on the road which Gunther and the little pitchman had taken on the night before, and there were now but few signs of the rivulets that had yesterday traversed the path.

The queen did not utter a word, but she often gazed at Walpurga, and many old memories and associations were awakened in her mind. There, walking along beside me, is a woman who was brought from her home at my request. In those days, when, with the king and Gunther, I was sitting under the weeping ash, I was gentle and forgiving towards the fallen, and Gunther said I deserved that thousands should pray for me. Did I really deserve it then? Do I deserve it now? At that time, no one had ever offended or injured me, and it was easy to appear forgiving. But as soon as I was wronged, I gave way to scorn and hatred, and pride in my own virtue, and encouraged myself in that feeling. He changed his whole life, put all that was trivial and vain away from him, and devoted his whole mind to faithful labors for the sake of his people, while I became more and more austere and inflexible just because I was so virtuous. Are you so virtuous after all? What is the virtue that lives for itself alone? And she who erred so bitterly; has she not expiated still more bitterly? Sinner though she be, she stands far above me. She died for my sake, and yet what has her death profited me? I have left my husband to achieve his difficult work, unaided and alone, deserted him in the hour of greatest need. I have lived for myself alone, for to live for my child was to live for myself. I have had charity for the poor and helpless. But how as to my first duty? I could not conquer myself—and am I the one who dares say that I am capable of the highest, and “if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out”? Gunther was right. No one can save you but yourself, for no one else can so often tell you the truth.

During the many years in which she has been striving to perfect herself, and in which he has strengthened himself in noble deeds for his people, what have I been doing? It is I who have sinned. You shall not die, Irma! You must still live, so that I can tell you that I am lost if you die without having forgiven me.

The queen gladly gave way to these thoughts, for they gradually lightened the burden which had so long exerted a depressing influence upon her.

“Have we much further to go?” she asked Walpurga.

Fear again seized her. If Irma were dead! If it were too late for the meeting that would free them both! She pressed her hand to her throbbing heart, as if it, too, must cease to beat when

the heart up there had ceased to live. In her mind's eye, she beheld Irma, as if glorified and transfigured, while she herself seemed so pitifully small.

"We'll soon be there," said Walpurga.

A voice above was heard, calling:

"Walpurga!"

The sound was echoed again and again from the mountains.

"That's my husband," said Walpurga to the queen and, in an equally loud voice, she called out:

"Hansei!"

He answered again from above.

Hansei drew near and when he saw the grand gentlemen, the ladies on horseback, and the liveried servants, he took off his hat and passed his hand over his eyes, as if to satisfy himself that he saw aright.

"How is it with her?" asked Walpurga.

"She's still alive, but she won't last long. I left about an hour ago, and who knows what may have happened since then? The doctor's with her, though."

"We can't ride any farther," said the inspector. The queen and Paula alighted. Sixtus and the servants followed, while they climbed the last hill.

"That's the queen there, in the light silk shawl," said Walpurga, addressing Hansei, with a significant gesture.

"It's all the same to me," he answered. "Our Irmgard's better than any of them. What matters the queen? When death comes, we're pretty much the same all round. We'll all of us have to die one of these days, and then it won't matter what we've been in these few years."

Bestowing a hurried glance on Hansei, and beckoning Paula to remain behind, the queen hastened forward. She was unattended, but yet, at her right and her left, before and behind her, were the spirits of fear and of deliverance. Fear cried: "Irma is dead; you are too late—" and it seemed as if this would arrest her steps and deprive her of her breath. Deliverance cried: "Hurry on—why loiter? You are free, you bring freedom with you, and shall gain freedom for yourself."

She put forth her hands, as if to wave off the powers that were contending within and about her.

Fear gained the mastery and, with a wailing shriek for help, she cried out:

"Irma! Irma!" and "Irma, Irma," was echoed again and again from the mountains. The whole world was shouting Irma's name.

Irma was still lying within the room, and Gunther was sitting at her bedside. Her breathing was difficult. She scarcely ever turned her head, and only now and then slightly opened her eyes.

Gunther had taken Eberhard's note book with him an opportunity to read these words of his to Irma: "I serve to enlighten me on the day and in the hour when I becomes obscured."

When he read the words: "God yet dwells in that which seems lost and ruined," Irma raised herself, but she soon came again and beckoned him to proceed. He read: "An my eye be dimmed in death—I have beheld the eternal one— My eyes have penetrated eternity. Free from distortion and self-destruction, the immortal spirit soars aloft."

Gunther stopped and laid the note book on Irma's bed. She rested her hand upon it. After awhile she raised her hand and, pressing it to her brow, said, while she closed her eyes:

"And yet he chastised me!"

"Whatever he may have done to you, was not done with his free, pure will. A paroxysm, a relapse into mortality, affected it. In the spirit of your father, and as surely as I hope that truth may dwell with me in my own dying hour, I forgive you. You have achieved your own pardon. Forgive him, as he has surely forgiven you. He would bless you now, as I bless you. Remember him lovingly, for the sake of the love he bore you."

Irma seized the hand which Gunther had laid upon her brow, and kissed it. Then, without turning around, and as if speaking to herself, she said: "Stay with me," again and again.

For hours, Gunther sat by her bedside. Not a sound was heard but her painful breathing, which was gradually becoming more and more difficult.

And now, when the mountains echoed her name again and again, Irma raised her head and looked to right and left. "Do you hear it, too?" she asked, "My name—voices, voices everywhere! Voices—" The door opened, and the queen entered the room.

"Oh! at last you are here!" gasped Irma, with a deep sigh. Gathering all the strength yet left her, she raised herself up and knelt in the bed. Her long hair fell over her, her eyes sparkled with a strange lustre. She folded her hands and, stretching out her arms, she cried, in heart-rending tones:

"Forgive me! Forgive me!"

"Forgive me, Irma! My sister!" sobbed the queen, clasping Irma in her arms and kissing her.

A smile passed over Irma's face. Then, uttering a loud cry, she fell back and was no more.

The queen knelt at her bedside and Walpurga, who had stood in the background, stepped forward and closed Irma's eyes.

All was hushed. Not a sound was heard, save the sobbing of the queen and Walpurga.

Steps were heard approaching.

"Where? Where is she?" cried the king.

Walpurga opened the door and with both hands motioned him to enter.

"Dearest," cried the king.

Walpurga replied affirmatively. He beckoned to Walpurga, and entered the room with him.

The king knelt down silently beside the corpse.

The queen arose and, placing her hand on her husband's head, said:

"Forgive me, Kurt, as I am forgiven!"

He seized the proffered hand, and, hand in hand, they stood there for a long while, gazing at Irma, on whose face there rested a gentle smile, even in death. It seemed as if they could not turn away from the sight. At last, the queen removed her white shawl and spread it over Irma.

They left the hut. The sun was setting in purple glory, and all about them was hushed in silence.

Gunther approached the queen, gave her the journal wrapped in the bandage, and said: "This is Irma's bequest to Your Majesty."

The queen went up to Walpurga, silently offered her hand, and kissed the child that she was carrying in her arms.

The king offered his hand to Hansei and said: "I thank you; I shall see you again."

The little pitchman went up to the king and queen and said:

"May God reward you for having come to her. She deserved it."

The king and queen walked away in the direction of the forest. Their retinue kept in the background.

CHAPTER XX.

THE king and queen went into the forest.

They were walking hand in hand.

Night drew on. The wind rustled through the tree-tops.

The queen stood still for a moment and then, impelled by the ardent love she had so long repressed, embraced her husband, kissing his eyes, his mouth and his brow, and said:

"I've asked the departed one to forgive me! She died with my kiss on her lips. I now ask you who still live, to forgive me. You have both expiated—she, alone, by herself; you, alone while at my side!"

She took out an amulet which she had worn hidden next to her heart. It was the betrothal ring which the king had given to her.

"Take this ring, and put it on your hand," she said.

"We are united anew," replied the king, while he put the ring on his finger and embraced the queen. He clasped her in his arms and her head rested against his heart.

With a firm step, they descended the mountain unto where their carriages were waiting for them.

Followed by the servants, Bronnen, Sixtus, and Paula also descended the mountain.

The king and queen were in the first carriage; Paula and Sixtus in the second. Bronnen went back with Gunther to the cottage.

The newly espoused arrived at the dairy-farm. The first thing they did was to go to the crown prince's apartments and, while they stood at the child's bed, the king said:

"He sleeps, and his innocent, infant mind knows nothing of our differences. It is well for us that, with his dawning powers, he will see in us only love and harmony, enduring unto death."

During all that night, the king and queen sat by the lamp, reading the journal of the solitary worldling.

Gunther and Bronnen had lingered in the hut above. Gunther sat with Walpurga for awhile, holding her hand in his, while he told her that her perfect innocence had now been brought to light. A silent nod was her only reply.

The cows gathered about the hut. Their bellowing and snorting proved that their unerring instinct told them of the presence of death, and scarcely were they driven away, before they returned again.

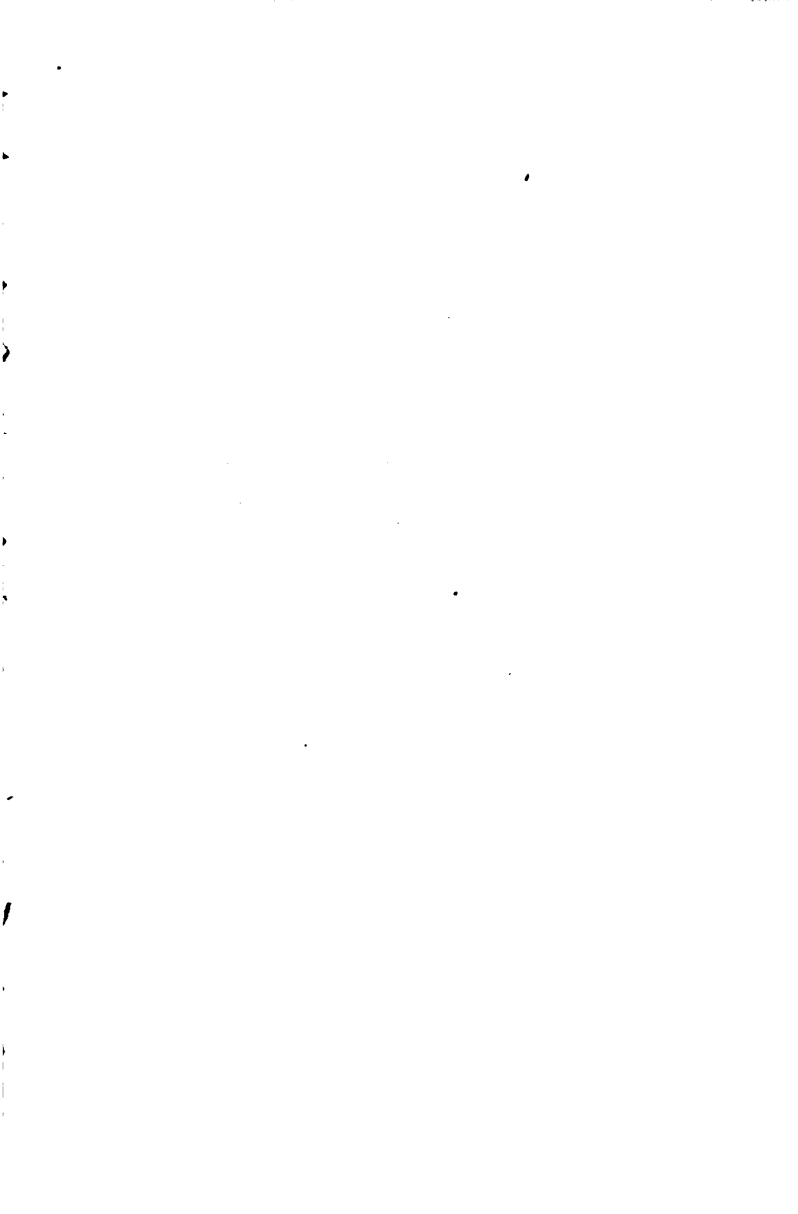
The little pitchman dug a grave during the night. It was up at the spot where Irma had so often rested. He shed many a tear over his work, and once, when he paused to take breath, said to himself: "When the kid is old enough to run of itself, I'll let it go back into the woods."

Irma was buried at early dawn. Hansei, the little pitchman, Gunther and Bronnen carried her, Walpurga and the child following after them. Gundel and Franz had covered the sides and the bottom of the grave with Alpine roses. Wrapped in the queen's white mantle, Irma was silently laid to rest, just as the rosy dawn appeared in the east.

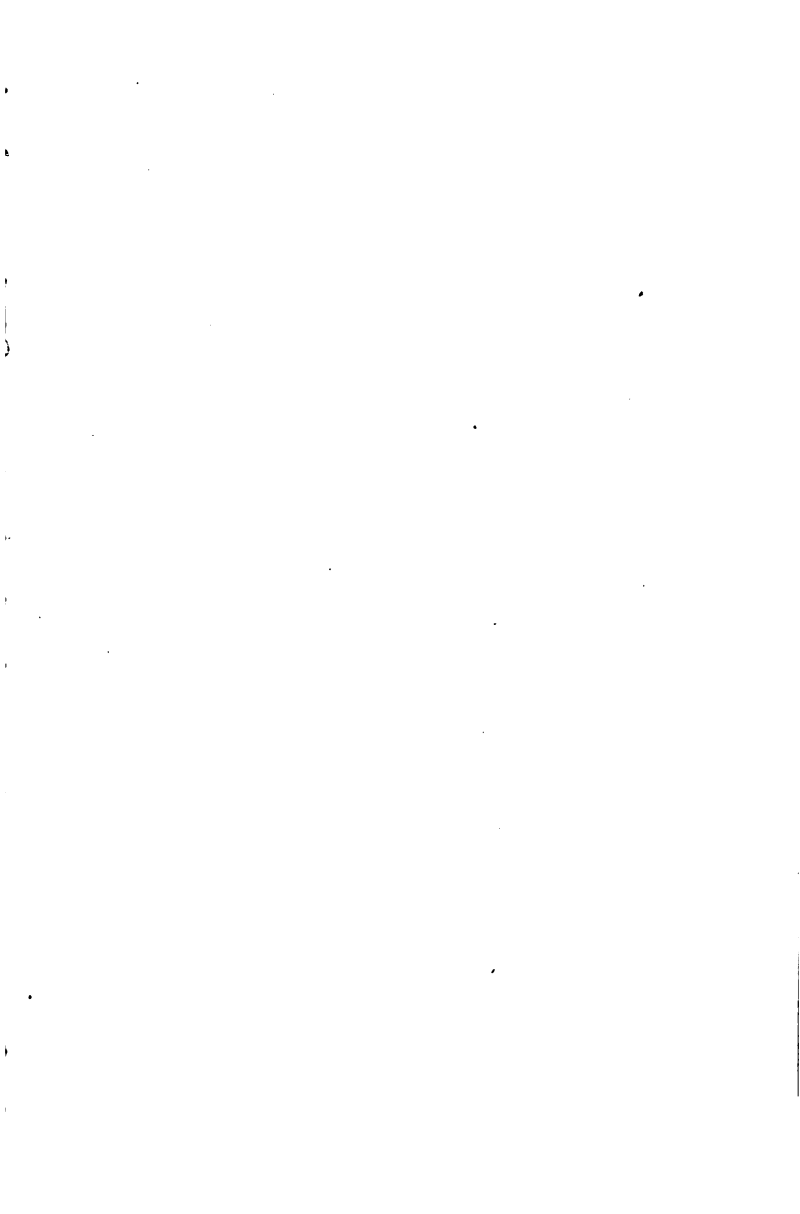
Down in the valley, the king and queen had been reading Irma's journal. Day was breaking. They gazed at the rosy dawn and lifted their eyes to the mountains—to where Irma was being buried on the heights.

THE END.

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